

# **A moving target: The informational needs of Polish migrant workers in Yorkshire and the Humber**

Ian Fitzgerald



## **Forward**

The economy in Yorkshire and the Humber has experienced sustained high rates of growth for a number of years and this has led to the need for increased numbers of migrant workers to fill our vacancy gaps. Indeed immigrant workers benefit the economy, leading to higher employment – and in fact some industries would collapse without them. Once in the UK, many migrant workers are unaware of their legal rights or unable to enforce them and face exploitation at work as a result. The TUC fights for equal rights for migrant workers, and assists unions to recruit, represent and organise migrant workers.

This report identifies that we need to ensure unscrupulous employers stop taking advantage of migrant workers' lack of knowledge of their rights and their poor English. The solution is to identify the minority of bad and poor employers and effectively enforce employment rights such as the minimum wage. We also need to campaign to close the current loopholes such as the poor protection given to agency workers. It is important to remember that it is these employers, not their migrant workers, who are responsible for the current race to the bottom.

We as a movement have a moral duty to protect all workers and in doing so make sure that all are fairly paid and a two-tier system based on a lower wages does not develop. Working on these issues in the workplace will also produce the added bonus of promoting community cohesion. Many people are unaware of migrant worker cultures and vice versa and by creating a union environment where people can work together on these issues we can create a fuller understanding of each other.

This report gives the TUC an up to date picture of the issues facing migrant workers particularly those from Eastern Europe, and will help us deliver our strategies for organising workers from all ethnic backgrounds.

**Bill Adams**

**(Regional Secretary Yorkshire and the Humber TUC)**

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# **Executive Summary**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The trade union movement is well aware that migration in its many forms is not new. However, the extent and scope of the recent accession of the A8<sup>1</sup> countries and in particular the Poles has caught many by surprise. Given this, information has often been at the forefront of these new migrants' needs and this report, commissioned by the Yorkshire and the Humber regional TUC, details the informational needs of Polish migrant workers and highlights what is currently available. What has been found is that there are currently a growing number of sources of information for new migrants and in particular the Poles, too many in fact to detail. Instead examples have been given, and more importantly the methods of providing this information are discussed. In particular, those which have involved trade union engagement with Polish workers are highlighted.

## **POLISH WORKERS IN YORKSHIRE AND THE HUMBER**

A recent Northern Way document (Hull City Council 2005)<sup>2</sup> notes that from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Hull was a central access point for approximately 2.2m European migrants moving from the old to the new worlds. Importantly, one of the documents stated aims is to encourage migration as a counter to a declining and ageing population (Hull City Council 2005: 4). New migration, though, to the Region raises three interlinked questions. First, how many A8 migrants and in particular the Poles have come to the Region, second, what sectors and employment are they likely to be working in and last how long are they likely to stay.

## **EXTENT OF POLISH MIGRATION TO THE REGION**

At a UK level confusion and consternation over migration has been fuelled by outmoded methods of data collection. But there are two significant reference points for A8 migration data. Firstly, the quarterly accession monitoring reports, and secondly, the National Insurance Number Allocations/Registrations (NINo) of overseas nationals entering the UK<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

<sup>2</sup> Hull City Council (2005) *The Northern Way: Hull and Humber Ports City Region Development Programme*, joint Hull City, East Riding of Yorkshire, North East Lincolnshire and North Lincolnshire Councils document, May 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Available at [http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/niall/nino\\_allocation.asp](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/niall/nino_allocation.asp)

It can be estimated that from May 2004 to September 2007 approaching 64,000 A8 workers had been registered in the Yorkshire Forward region. The NINo figures from mid-2004 to mid-2007 reveal that during this period over 47,430 A8s, of which 30,560 (64% of A8s) were Polish, had been allocated national insurance numbers in the Region.

The largest numbers of these Poles (19,830) are resident in Bradford, Doncaster, the East Riding of Yorkshire, Hull, Leeds, Sheffield, and Wakefield. Within these localities only Doncaster and the East Riding of Yorkshire have seen a slight decrease in the numbers of Poles being allocated NINo numbers for the last 2006-07 period, ten per cent and seven per cent respectively. Whilst all other areas witnessed significant rises, with Bradford increasing the number of Polish allocations by over one-hundred per cent.

This, though, may hide more than it reveals as small towns and villages have often been the recipients of newly arrived Polish and A8 workers. Until the data at a local level is refined, information is likely to be either patchy or based on intelligence received by trade union representatives in the field.

## **THE REGIONAL LABOUR MARKET AND POLISH WORKERS**

Moving on to our second question of the labour market position of A8 and Polish workers, the accession monitoring report data cannot be disaggregated regionally. Regional interviewees did, though, note that new Polish workers in the Region were in some key sectors such as agriculture, construction, food processing, horticulture, manufacturing (foundries), packaging, printing and were entering finance.

Interestingly, the accession monitoring reports also reveal that the vast majority of registered workers (77%) are earning between £4.50 - £5.99 per hour. Significantly, for the movement some interviewees also spoke about 'displacement' of indigenous workers and separate groups as new migrants, particularly the Poles were bought into workplaces at lower rates of pay.

Given this both Unite Amicus section and Ucat interviewees specifically spoke of the importance of maintaining the 'rate-for-the-job'. It is clear what this means for indigenous workers, but even though the wages and early expectations of A8 and Polish migrants may be that things are better in the UK than at home there is often a nightmare awaiting many of these workers.

Carby-Hall (2007) identifies that this nightmare is built on a five part scenario. Firstly, beginning with the 'fear' that many A8 migrants display when questioned about exploitative conditions; secondly, that this is often difficult to challenge as A8 migrants are widely scattered in a number of economic sectors; thirdly, that some of the worst excesses of exploitation are akin to 'forced labour' and 'modern slavery'; fourthly, that actual abuse is multi-faced and can not be tied down to a single practice; and fifthly, that

gangmasters and some employment agencies play a significant role in this and often have a dominant controlling interest.

### **THE TRANSITORY NATURE OF POLISH WORKERS**

In discussing our final, transitory, question it is worth highlighting that this question now looms large on the horizon for many trade unions. A number of national level trade union officials are talking in particular about the transitory nature of many Poles and the influence this has on their organising strategies.

However, we need to ask ourselves what transitory means. Commonly with regard to migration it relates to those workers who come to the UK and decide it is not for them and either return home or to another country. There are also those who come on a seasonal or short-term basis, for example Polish students in the labour market, the numerous cheap transport links to Poland are also important. In the same vein it can further relate to those who decide that the job they started with is not ideal and either move employer in the same locality or region or move to other regions. Finally, many Polish and migrant workers are transported from cities, small towns or villages to employers many miles away. All of these situations are a challenge to trade unions not only from the point of view of engagement but importantly how people are 'serviced' once they have joined the union.

### **THE NEED FOR INFORMATION AND INTEGRATION**

If the movement wants to engage with Polish migrant workers, it must pose itself the question, following the arrival of Polish migrants to the Region what do they require and how far can trade unions assist with these requirements? The issue then becomes what is actually out there at differing local, regional, national and international levels.

It is significant to note that since accession to the EU, UK research reports for government, trade unions and other agencies have consistently identified that one of the first things people ask for is information.

### **SPECIFIC INFORMATIONAL REQUIREMENTS**

In interviews with Polish community activists a number of specific information needs were detailed, although it is clear that a larger scale study is needed if the distinct locational and sectorial informational requirements of Polish workers in the Region are to be captured.

The actual specific needs of Poles were considered by Polish activists to be broad information on employment rights, including for example the minimum wage, holiday entitlement and other specific rights at work. Not surprisingly, accommodation information was considered important and issues around banking. Areas highlighted

that are possibly moving into integration and possible longer-term settlement were how to obtain driving licences; benefits and importantly information on education (a major issue in Bradford). Underpinning all of this, as the movement is well aware, is the need for English language classes and this came through again in this study.

Before moving on it is also worth highlighting some Regional examples which have dealt with information and support needs. The Regional multi-agency (including trade unions) forum *Selby Together* was formed following the lead of the church (I&Dea 2007: 14<sup>4</sup>). To further its aims of how to improve services for migrant workers it distributed a Polish language questionnaire<sup>5</sup> at places of work, colleges and wherever training was provided. The results of the questionnaire were a need for both written and spoken language support; accommodation, banking and healthcare advice; issues around childcare, jobs and benefits; and information on adult education and leisure. This then led to the development of a welcome pack which is briefly discussed later (see also Appendix One).

Above and consistently in other research Polish and migrant needs go beyond the normal remit of trade unions. This can pose challenges for trade unions, around the delivery of these needs and the trust of Poles if issues are not resolved by other service providers.

## INFORMATION INITIATIVES

So what information is actually available for Polish migrants and how can it be accessed? The following briefly highlights a number of initiatives including welcomepacks, websites and webpages, drop-in sessions and telephone lines, many of these are given more attention in Section Three of this report.

**Welcome Packs:** There have been a range of these types of information resource. They can be packs with an amount of useful material in them or short precise documents with key details given. Details in packs can include both living in the locality type information, for example details on accommodation and tenancy; local libraries; and local council and NHS services. As well as employment rights and health and safety at work information.

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<sup>4</sup> I&DEA (2007) *New European Migration: Good Practice Guide for Local Authorities, Communities and Local Government* and Institute of Community Cohesion, June 2007

<sup>5</sup> Poles were identified as the dominant group (85% of migrants) following a mapping study of the area.

At a Regional level examples of welcome packs are the *East Riding Welcome Pack*<sup>6</sup> which is a two-page document giving basic information and details of support or contact lines. The paper version is currently in English only but is available in Polish as a webpage via the East Riding of Yorkshire Council website<sup>7</sup>. Whilst at least 3,000 copies of the *Hull Together! Welcome Pack* have been distributed<sup>8</sup>. Finally, the *Selby Together Welcome Pack* has been produced loose-leaf so that information updates, distributed on a six monthly basis<sup>9</sup>, and more localised information, such as refuse collection can be inserted. The pack again covers a range of issues including housing, tenancy, health entitlements, education and emergency service information (see Appendix One).

**Websites and web based information:** The web is becoming an important feature of modern life and with regard to migrant workers the TUC has for a while had the WorkingSmart website<sup>10</sup>, though this is in English only. But it does have a link to a Polish version of the 'Working in the UK: Know your rights' booklet<sup>11</sup>. It also has a link to the Citizens Signpost Service<sup>12</sup> which is a free EU website aimed at EU citizens who encounter problems with mobility in the European Internal Market. Significantly, following a recent launch the TUC in conjunction with Solidarnosc and the CAB now have a Polish language website<sup>13</sup>.

In the Region Barnsley Council<sup>14</sup> as a website which has a wealth of local, regional and important general information for new arrivals. Bradford<sup>15</sup> also has available from its

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<sup>6</sup> [http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/migrantworkers/downloads/east\\_riding\\_welcome\\_pack.pdf](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/migrantworkers/downloads/east_riding_welcome_pack.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.eastriding.gov.uk/migrant\\_workers/polish.html](http://www.eastriding.gov.uk/migrant_workers/polish.html)

<sup>8</sup> The trade unions are well aware of these developments as the Regional TUC has been increasingly involved in activities with the Polish community in Hull.

<sup>9</sup> I&DEA (2007) *New European Migration: Good Practice Guide for Local Authorities, Communities and Local Government* and Institute of Community Cohesion, June 2007

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.worksmart.org.uk/rights/viewsubsection.php?sun=82> The TUC also now provide the joint TUC, Solidarnosc and CAB website.

<sup>11</sup> The booklet is meant to be distributed via the Home Office to recently arrived A8 migrants to the UK, although a senior TUC official has noted that this has not always occurred.

<sup>12</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/citizensrights/>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.pracawbrytanii.org> For further details see <http://www.tuc.org.uk/international/tuc-13869-f0.cfm>

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.barnsley.gov.uk/bguk/New\\_Arrivals](http://www.barnsley.gov.uk/bguk/New_Arrivals)

<sup>15</sup> [http://www.bradford.gov.uk/life\\_in\\_the\\_community/neighbourhood\\_forums/district-diversity/](http://www.bradford.gov.uk/life_in_the_community/neighbourhood_forums/district-diversity/)



website a fairly comprehensive introduction to the town in Polish, which includes information on employment rights and the TUC.

**Drop-in centres and drop-in sessions:** Another way to provide information and engage with Polish workers is through differing forms of **drop-in sessions**. For example the GMB, as apart of their collaborative 'Reaching Out to New Communities' project<sup>16</sup>, have run a series of drop-in sessions to give help and advice to migrant workers. Whilst in Penrith (Cumbria) the Police and local council combined to make use of a housing association foyer which was being regularly used by migrant workers.

**Telephone helplines:** Have also been identified by a number of projects as useful (see de Lima et al. 2007; Fitzgerald 2007a; MSIO 2006)<sup>17</sup>. Unions have engaged with these, for example there is a WorkingSmart telephone helpline.

Overall there is a growing amount of information provided by not only differing layers of organisations but also organisations, NGOs and government agencies at a European, national, regional and local level. The question becomes then, after Poles have taken up employment and settled here for a short period why they are still asking for 'any information'. The central issue is that with the multi-entry points that we now have, due to multiple transport links, and the need at these UK arrival points for speed of entry, it is perhaps not surprisingly that many, if not all, are information free. The control exercised by agencies and employers is of course also significant here. Given this once Poles are in the country it clearly becomes a more difficult task of engagement and mapping with often access the key.

## REACHING OUT – ENGAGING WITH NEW POLISH WORKERS

A growing amount of information is being produced so the issue becomes one of not only focus but also access to information. From a union point of view an important side of access is engagement with Polish workers. This engagement is often tied to Polish migrant worker trust of unions and trade union representatives. As many unions will

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<sup>16</sup> This was a collaborative project with Prospects Services Ltd and further details can found at the following link: <http://www.epolitix.com/EN/Forums/GMB/PressReleases/200511/11404e3f-41a8-47d3-872d-f392b702dce7.htm>

<sup>17</sup> De Lima, P., Chaudhry, M.M., Whelton, R. and Arshad, R. (2007) *A study of migrant workers in Grampian*, report for Communities Scotland, July 2007; Ian Fitzgerald (2007a: 2) *Working in the UK: Polish migrant worker routes into employment in the North East and North West construction and food processing sectors*, London: TUC; MISO (2006) *Supporting Migrant Workers in the North West of England*, Merseyside Social Inclusion Observatory policy report 3, October 2006.

be aware gaining trust can be a time consuming process both within and outside the workplace.

As a way of dealing with these issues of engagement and trust many unions have sort to deploy Polish reps and full-time organisers (Fitzgerald 2007a)<sup>18</sup>. This has also been found in the current study and may indicate a significant change in attitude in the Region.

The remainder of this section discusses access to Polish workers by highlighting trade union engagement with Polish workers at the workplace, in the community and finally how collaboration can be an effective approach underpinning information strategies.

### **ENGAGING WITH POLISH WORKERS: AT THE REGIONAL WORKPLACE**

The workplace is still often the first place of contact for a trade union with regard to Polish migrant workers and remains the central arena in which unions undertake their role. As noted above this first contact can often lead to a long drawn out process as unions build trust with Polish workers. A number of interviewees reported that building this trust and engagement with Poles was initially begun with 'breaking the ice' initiatives. These can often be just short conversations with Poles or a simple show of friendship. More strategic examples are the learning agenda discussed below.

A number of interviews also reported the reverse side of this engagement. The reticence of Poles with regard to unions, whilst the ZPWB representative in Bradford believed that this may be due to an attitude amongst some Poles of '*why do I have to fork-out for union membership?*' A number of union interviewees felt, though, that it was more to do with Polish fears that employers would dismiss them if they spoke to the union.

This is of course also to do with an amount of general employer hostility to trade unions and feeds into the broader question of sectors and workplaces where unions have a strong presence and those where they do not. At sites where there was a union presence the learning agenda had proved useful. Here a number of unions reported the significance of ESOL provision in providing evidence to Poles of the unions' importance. Workplace learning centres had been used to engage with Poles who used learning centre computers to book flights home and communicate with family and friends. This provided an opportunity for reps to begin communication; often putting the case to Poles that unions administered the centres and that there was an opportunity to be involved in mainly ESOL initiatives if they joined unions.

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<sup>18</sup> Fitzgerald, I. (2007a) *Working in the UK: Polish migrant worker routes into employment in the North East and North West construction and food processing sectors*, London: TUC.

Interviewees further spoke of the importance of maintaining the 'rate-for-the-job'. This can often be the most effective means of supporting and engaging with Polish workers in the workplace. As even when Polish workers have the right information this still does not mean that they can use this to effectively safeguard their employment rights. It is clear that the workplace will always remain a major point of engagement with Polish workers and a place where information needs can both be catered for and decided on. But as readers will be only too aware union workplaces are not as common as they once were. Due to this unions are becoming increasingly involved in potential access and engagement areas external to the workplace.

### **ENGAGING WITH POLISH WORKERS: BEYOND THE REGIONAL WORKPLACE**

Beyond the workplace means having to think about community. Community begs a range of questions, the most obvious being age, gender and locality. Two TUC reports<sup>19</sup> in the north of England have identified that for too long BME communities have been 'left' by trade unions with piecemeal contact, except intermittently at the workplace. The accession of the A8 countries provided a new imperative to engage with migrant workers and some of the most innovative work has occurred with the Poles<sup>20</sup>.

Perrett and Martinez Lucio (2006a and 2006b)<sup>21</sup> in their work in the Region highlight the importance of networks when engaging with any community but particularly when dealing with BME populations. The idea of networks can be extended to include not only those groups engaged in working for their communities but also the networks that make up a community, which can often be more open and fluid. For the Poles the most obviously already existing networks are the Federation of Poles in Great Britain (ZPWB), whose network extends to northern representatives who have often played a leading role with newly arrived Poles. Also already here were the Polish churches and their parish committees, which are often linked to the ZPWB. The more open and fluid

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<sup>19</sup> Perrett, R. and Martinez Lucio, M. (2006b) *Trade Unions and Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Communities in Yorkshire and the Humber: Employment representation and community organisations in a context of change*, Leeds: Yorkshire and the Humber TUC ; and Fitzgerald, I. and Stirling, J. (2004) *BME views of trade unions*, Newcastle upon Tyne: TUC.

<sup>20</sup> Fitzgerald, I. and Hardy, J. (2007) *'Thinking Outside the Box': Trade Union Organising Strategies and Polish Migrant Workers in the UK*, paper presented at the International Industrial Relations Association, Manchester, 3rd – 6th September 2007.

<sup>21</sup> Perrett, R. and Martinez Lucio, M. (2006a) *Networks, Communities and the Representation of Black and Minority Ethnic Workers in Employment Relations: The realities of community politics and trade unions*, Bradford University School of Management Working Paper 06/16, June 2006; and (2006b) *Trade Unions and Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Communities in Yorkshire and the Humber: Employment representation and community organisations in a context of change*, Leeds: Yorkshire and the Humber TUC.

networks are, for example, personified by the web which now play an important part in the functioning of some developing Polish northern networks.

### *Traditional and long established networks*

The Federation of Poles in Great Britain (ZPWB) and the Catholic Church offer two readily identifiable access points to Polish networks and often large groupings of Polish workers. Network members have often been at the forefront of assisting newly arrived Polish migrant workers and offer excellent opportunities for the dissemination of information.

*The Federation of Poles in Great Britain (ZPWB)*<sup>22</sup>: Are an umbrella organisation representing the interests of Polish groups in the UK (interview with Jan Mokrzycki – President of the ZPWB). The ZPWB has a number of representatives in the UK, significantly for this Region Mokrzycki stated that they had four representatives in the Region, all in Yorkshire (in Bradford, Huddersfield, Leeds and Sheffield). Of further importance is the fact that they have just obtained funding to support an outreach worker in Bradford.

The new edition of the ZPWB's 'How to Live and Work in Great Britain' (in Polish) is awaiting production of approximately 30,000 copies. Seventy thousand of the earlier editions had been distributed. The currently available electronic version<sup>23</sup> contains basic but essential information, from how to register and get a national insurance number, to how to get your child into a school. Significantly, it also carries advertisements by trade unions and a piece on the importance of trade unions for Polish workers. Finally, it is important to highlight that Mokrzycki has established important links with the TUC nationally and for example in the Midlands and would welcome engagement in this Region.

*The Catholic Church*: The church were significantly involved in the struggles in Poland in the 1980s and Solidarnosc have reported in previous interviews with the author that churches were often used as clandestine meeting places following services. Interestingly now when asked a Solidarnosc international officer described how when he went to Ireland he was surprised at how many young people attended church.

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<sup>22</sup> Further contact details and information can be found at <http://www.zpwb.org.uk/eg/index.php>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.zpwb.org.uk/pl/index.php>

As <sup>24</sup> Mokrzycki confirmed when asked about the church '*often they are the first point of contact*' for newly arrived Polish workers. With regard to the actual numbers of churches the Audit Commission (2007)<sup>25</sup> state that there are currently 68 Polish churches in England and Wales (ibid 18). There are also a number of others that provide Polish mass. Importantly, for this study at least four of these are based in Yorkshire (for example those in Bradford, Huddersfield, Leeds and Sheffield), which is of course also the location of the ZPWB Regional representatives. Finally, it is significant to note that unions in this Region reported undertaking community organising through the Polish Church.

### ***Direct community engagement with Polish workers: Locations and 'events'***

Apart from the ZPWB and Church there are a range of other community focal points which are used on a regular basis by Polish workers. For example in the Region a recent presentation by a North Yorkshire County Council officer highlighted that information boards in local libraries were being extensively used by migrant workers, many of whom are Poles<sup>26</sup>.

Many trade unionists and all major unions are aware of the importance of either one-off events or more regular drop-in sessions which provide both general and union specific information. A number of these, if not organised on Church premises, often take place in local community centres frequented by the Poles. These are often either union led providing specific information on the union and employment rights or are union and multi-agency based providing a range of information.

Polish community interviewees were generally positive about the events so far organised. The ZPWB Bradford representative, particularly liked a Unite Amicus section event run at the Bradford Resource Centre as it was multi-agency, had signposting and a number of interpreters. He commented that '*....the Bradford Resource Centre is ideal. The approaches used so far have been excellent and very welcoming*'.

### ***The Polish UK media: A growing attraction***

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<sup>24</sup> Martinez Lucio, M. and Perrett, R. (2007) *Social inclusion and representation strategies in the workplace and community: Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) workers and innovative trade union responses*, Leeds: Yorkshire and the Humber TUC.

<sup>25</sup> Audit Commission (2007) *Crossing borders: Responding to the local challenges of migrant workers*, public services national report, January 2007, London: Audit Commission.

<sup>26</sup> Walker, D. (2007) *Current Responses to the Needs of the BME Community and Routes by which the Public Sector can be Influenced*, York and North Yorkshire Multi-agency Black Minority and Ethnic Social Inclusion Conference, 21 March 2007.

Approaches so far identified have involved physical situations when there are clear face-to-face opportunities to talk with Polish workers. The growing Polish media also provides an opportunity to potentially reach a wider number of Polish workers and those who may be in the most vulnerable situations and difficult to reach locations.

**Newspapers and magazine:** There are a growing number of Polish newspapers and magazines, often localised around Polish parishes or larger regional cities and towns. Some like the Polish Express have UK wide distribution through some of the most important high street names like WHSmith News and John Menzies. Two unions in the Region highlighted this as a good way to both establish a presence with Poles and provide information. Whilst the newly established union Unite had co-ordinated its separate sections, Amicus, GPMU and T&G along with Thompsons and planned to initially support a Leeds based Polish newspaper. The Leeds Polish centre is going to assist in producing this 8,000 circulation newspaper, with the other partners funding the early editions.

**Electronic communications:** The development of new forms of communication is one of the most dramatic changes in our society today. For example in Poland there has been a significant increase in the usage of all types of communication technology since accession. The Polish Central Statistical Office notes a 'dynamic growth' in mobile phone usage in 2006 to 38.8 million subscribers<sup>27</sup>. This amounted to a twenty-six per cent rise on 2005. More importantly household possession of personal computers and those with internet access have significantly increased.

Whilst marketing web resources for differing ethnic groups clearly has a number of challenges. There are, however, significant possibilities for collaboration with a number of the Polish websites that have appeared rapidly over the last three years. Fitzgerald (2007b)<sup>28</sup> estimates that by March 2007 there were approximately 35 UK Polish administered, Polish language, websites covering both countries (11 - UK, Scotland and Wales) and specific towns and cities (24). Interestingly, the majority (13) were based in the North of the Country. With the North East (6 – 46% of those in the north) and Yorkshire and the Humber (5 – 38% of those in the north)<sup>29</sup> having a combined total of forty-six per cent of those representing towns and cities.

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<sup>27</sup> CSO (2007b) *Household budget surveys in 2006*, Poland: Central Statistical Office, ISSN 1896-4567.

<sup>28</sup> Fitzgerald, I. (2007) *Polish internet recourses for the UK and Eire*, unpublished document, March 2007.

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.leeds.pl/>; <http://www.hull.pl/>; <http://www.hull.com.pl/>; <http://www.polacywyorku.org.uk/>; <http://www.polskiegoole.u2.pl/>

Significantly, the web administrator of the Hull site (<http://www.hull.pl/>), which was setup by the Polish Association in Hull, in confirming these Regional figures, noted that the web administrators of these Regional sites had a network. He offered to extend his collaboration with the Regional TUC by approaching this network and discussing the possibility of providing trade union information and advertising on these sites (Hull Polish web administrator).

## THE NEED FOR A MORE STRATEGIC APPROACH

As many unions will be aware time, resources and the actual numbers of officers and workplace representatives able to undertake a sustained approach to engaging with Polish workers is limited. A number of Regional trade union interviewees spoke about either a lack of resources to develop a sustained approach or the need for trade union collaboration with other organisations dealing with Polish migrant workers.

To develop a strategic approach often means not only developing co-ordinated internal policies and practices or engaging with other unions through the TUC. It also means a co-ordinated approach to collaboration with other organisations that are often facing the same challenges and problems.

**Employer collaboration:** There are cases of employer and trade union collaboration with regard to the informational needs of newly arrived Polish workers. For example the Northern bus companies (Arriva, GO Ahead Northern and First Group) have worked in 'partnership' with trade unions to introduce Polish workers into their workforce with many consequential informational needs met as standard. With First Group this included engagement with MWNW and the company being one of the first employers to sign the North West regions employer's code of practice for employing migrant workers.

The Commission on Integration and Cohesion (2007)<sup>30</sup> have recently stated that '*....the workplace provides a significant, ongoing opportunity to address the cumulative effects of the layers of separation in society....particularly if that interaction is supported and encouraged by employers working in partnership with employees*' (ibid.: 117). Given this they recommend that the Commission for Equality and Human Rights and the CBI arrange regular regional forums (with a national steering group) for representatives of employers and employees. There is an opportunity to become a key partner in these developments with the TUC either 'campaigning' for a role in these new forums or co-ordinating any current engagement that exists.

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<sup>30</sup> Commission on Integration and Cohesion (2007) *Our Shared Future*, Commission on Integration and Cohesion, June 2007.

***Business and NGO collaboration:*** There are currently examples of businesses collaborating with trade unions to provide assistance and information to Polish migrant workers. For example, Ucatt have an agreement with a company, which amongst other things, provides assistance to Polish workers with their WRS registration and claiming their tax and industry benefits from HM Revenue and Customs.

Importantly, signs of solicitor and trade union collaboration were found in this study with, for example, Thompsons provide a weekly workshop in a community centre. This works on a support basis with Thompsons passing on any Polish workers who need support within the workplace to Unite Amicus section. At the national level the collaboration of the TUC and NGOs has been highlighted, whilst the following are examples of regional projects that have supported and often been linked into the newly forming Polish communities.

***Selby together:*** Is a Regional example of collaboration between the church, NGOs, local councils, health trusts, emergency services, training providers and the Unite T&G section. Activities are funded from a variety of sources and organisations.

***Hull together:*** Provides another Regional example of joint collaboration between a range of organisations, including the Regional TUC. Interestingly, it again developed through the church and involved early engagement with the Polish web administrator interviewed for this project.

***Local council collaboration:*** As seen with several of the Regional websites highlighted, local councils often provide an important contact point for Polish workers to access information on locations and importantly service provision. Whilst again there is likely to have been one-off or personal contacts between councils and unions there is no established sustainable network or meeting forum to develop a joint mutually beneficial strategy.

Significantly, the recent Communities and Local Government and Institute of Community Cohesion good practice guide for new European engagement<sup>31</sup> encourages councils to collaborate with a number of those in the Polish community, business and trade unions. There is a clear opportunity here for either the TUC or unions such as Unison to approach local councils and look to develop structures for a sustainable response to Polish informational needs.

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<sup>31</sup> I&DEA (2007) *New European Migration: Good Practice Guide for Local Authorities, Communities and Local Government and Institute of Community Cohesion*, June 2007.



***RDA collaboration:*** There are clear opportunities to seek collaboration over an information and support strategy for Polish and migrant workers through the Regional RDA Yorkshire Forward. A number of RDAs, including Yorkshire Forward<sup>32</sup>, are either in the process of forming, or have well developed, migrant worker strategies. The most obvious example of trade union collaboration in these strategies is Migrant Workers North West (MWNW). Here the Unite T&G section and other regional unions have led a joint collaboration with the Northwest Regional Development Agency to provide a project involving a website and project worker. Significant here has been engagement with employers to establish a code of practice for the employment of migrant workers.

***Sustainable community collaboration:*** Finally, it is important to re-emphasise the importance in not only establishing lasting engagements with Polish community organisations. But also to develop flexible sustainable structures involving trade unionists, key community activists and when needed migrant workers. This will allow not only the identification of poor employers but also key contacts to assist with accessing the informational needs or other needs of Polish migrant workers on a regular basis.

## **PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

This report has identified many of the practical information and engagement initiatives that are currently occurring in the region and beyond. Given that many of these are current and ongoing we now need to put in place practical measures which will be undertaken in the near future. The first six recommendations are achievable and can effectively be integrated into already existing strategies and programmes. Whilst the seventh international recommendation is something that should be considered given that the north in the past has engaged effectively with Solidarnosc:

1. The regional TUC should seek to make contact with the ZPWB Bradford based project worker to coordinate work and improve community links;
2. The regional TUC should underpin this top down community engagement by seeking to make contact with the growing number of Polish community groups and local churches where Polish workers often socialise;
3. Contact with groups will mean engagement with some Polish community activists and migrant workers who are seeking to work with other BME communities. This

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<sup>32</sup> See Experian (2006) *Attracting Talent: Final report*, report for Yorkshire Forward, the Humber Economic Forum, North West Development Agency, the Welsh Assembly Government, Skills for Care, Skills for Health and the Department of Trade and Industry's Small Business Service, October 2006.

will allow Polish migrant worker projects to be integrated into the core of trade union work. A starting point here is the informational needs of Polish workers which can be integrated into the already existing BME community project, which seeks to provide information and advice in local BME communities;

4. This report has identified that there is a need to strengthen governmental responses with regard to migrant worker issues. Given this the Yorkshire and the Humber regional MEPs should be contacted to consider ways of working at governmental levels on migrant and agency worker issues;
5. This report identifies that the internet is of growing importance to Polish workers. Given this, contact should be re-established with the Hull Polish web administrator. Who is also significant for local engagement with the Polish church and the other Polish websites in the region;
6. To further promote the issue of migrant and agency workers in the region and further integrate work into a sustainable core. It is crucial that the regional TUC promote the Commission on Vulnerable Employment;
7. Lastly, at the international level the regional TUC should seriously consider how it and its regional affiliates might engage with trade unions and NGOs in migrant worker countries. As a beginning Solidarnosc offers a real opportunity to begin this process, given the positive recent experience in the north with this Polish union.

## AN UPDATE

This report was completed in December 2007 and has had some ad hoc updating since then. Although its belated launch is in 2009 the information and details contained within it are still as relevant and pertinent today. This short update contains some recent developments that are significant for the report.

In particular the 'notion' that A8 workers are now all going home leaves us asking the question need we do anything? These large numbers of A8 workers who were here for such a short period can now surely be left for historians to consider. But of course the reality is very different, even though the administrative sources show less A8s applying to work in the UK<sup>33</sup> it is important to remember that there is still no single data source that informs us of migration change. Rather there is qualitative research that shows that A8 workers have a far greater opportunity to be mobile than many other previous waves of immigrants. In essence a number have come to the UK, returned home and then come back again. Overall the fact remains that even though the government have made important moves to improve our statistical understanding of migration, we can still only piece together a number of differing survey and administration sources to paint a picture of change. Intelligence on the ground from those directly involved with migrant workers, like trade union organisers and workplace representatives, is still our most important tool for up-to-date information.

Given that large numbers of A8 and Polish workers are still present in our Regional communities and workplaces, trade unions have a vital role to play. Especially with the creeping recession and growing redundancies which mean that issues of integration and inclusion are now to the fore. Trade unions can continue to collaborate with others to provide important factual information for both migrants and indigenous workers alike. To support this trade unions have continued to develop their Polish organisers and reps, with one of the most significant strategies being the support the TUC have given to an impending meeting of Polish trade union organisers<sup>34</sup>. Here the Polish trade unions OPZZ and Solidarnosc will be represented by senior officers implementing

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<sup>33</sup> The latest information on the allocation of national insurance numbers to overseas nationals entering the UK is now interactive and is available at <http://83.244.183.180/mgw/live/tabtool.html> Whilst the WRS data is now supplemented, for those with a .gov.uk email address, by local authority level figures of A8 registrations. Information on this is available at <http://www.lgar.local.gov.uk/lgv/core/page.do?pageId=27879>

<sup>34</sup> Developing a Network for Polish Migrant Workers: TUC Congress House, 26<sup>th</sup> January 2009.

recommendation 7 of this report, providing a practical example of trade union collaboration below the often complicated national bureaucratic level of official trade unionism. The ZPWB will also be represented at the meeting by its president. Overall this provides a historic opportunity for Polish trade union officers from the UK and Poland to discuss how they can work together to support those Polish workers still coming to the UK and those already working here.

Now turning to those large numbers of Polish workers who are still here, a number have, as this report notes, become involved in Polish community groups. An example of this is in the North East, where the author has become the Patron of a Polish Association Pegaz. Pegaz is one of four Polish associations in that region and they are currently engaged in 'negotiating' a space in a local authority building where they and other BME groups will provide information and support to local immigrants. Again the ZPWB are involved and recently their president has made attempts to bring these groups under its banner.

To close, overall since this report was completed the regional TUC have progressed in their work with migrant workers and in particular the Poles. It has already been highlighted that recommendation 7 is being acted upon in January. Whilst work is progressing well with regard to recommendation 3 (integrating Polish work into the core BME community project) and 6 (promoting the work of the Commission on Vulnerable Employment). Lastly, there have been ongoing meetings between regional TUC senior officials to progress both recommendation 1 (regional TUC to contact ZPWB project worker) and 4 (regional TUC engagement with the Yorkshire and the Humber MEPs). These meetings have so far supported a Polish week which included cultural events. Lastly, Regional MEPs have given their support to further work being undertaken at a European Commission level to support better regulation with regard to abuse of A8 workers.

Ian Fitzgerald – 12<sup>th</sup> December 2008

[ian.fitzgerald@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:ian.fitzgerald@northumbria.ac.uk)

(0191) 227 4362

## Introduction

The trade union movement is well aware that migration in its many forms is not new. However, the extent and scope of the recent accession of the A8<sup>35</sup> countries and in particular the Poles has caught many by surprise. Poles were once driven by conflict to seek shelter on foreign shores, the pressure though now is often financial and a belief that a 'better life' can be found in the 'rich' economies of old Europe. Often the journey begins with little in-depth knowledge of new destinations or with false promises made by unscrupulous agencies and employers. Given this information has often been at the forefront of these new migrants' needs and this report, commissioned by the Yorkshire and the Humber regional TUC, details the informational needs of Polish migrant workers and highlights what is currently available. To achieve this aim the author has sort to classify information sources in both the Region<sup>36</sup> and where possible elsewhere. What has been found is that there are currently a growing number of sources of information for new migrants and in particular the Poles, too many in fact to detail. Instead examples have been given, and more importantly the methods of providing this information are discussed. In particular, those which have involved trade union engagement with Polish workers are highlighted. This has been supplemented with evidence from the Region obtained via interviews and discussions with key trade union and Polish community representatives. The remainder of this report is broken down into the following sections. Section One discusses new Polish migrants in the region. Section Two details their need for information and the types of information available. Section Three discusses the linkages that have, and can be, built with these newly

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<sup>35</sup> Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

<sup>36</sup> A capital R is used to designate the Yorkshire and the Humber region.

arrived Polish workers, including the organising and recruitment strategies that unions have used. Section Four identifies the need for trade union collaboration with other organisations and the importance of developing sustainable trade union based structures where long standing Polish engagement can be built. Section Five offers a number of key practical recommendations that can be implemented.

# 1. Polish workers in Yorkshire and the Humber

*A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and, seeing a better country, sets sail.<sup>37</sup>*

*There is a distorted image of the West, the streets are not paved with gold, and people's confidence is 'dented'. A lot are suffering in silence. (ZPWB representative: Bradford)*

A recent Northern Way document (Hull City Council 2005)<sup>38</sup> notes that from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Hull was a central access point for approximately 2.2m European migrants moving from the old to the new worlds. This serves as a reminder that migration, and particularly that from Europe is not new to the Regions shores. Importantly, one of the documents stated aims is to encourage migration as a counter to a declining and aging population (Hull City Council 2005: 4). This certainly seems to have happened in not only Yorkshire and the Humber but in the North of England as a whole. The accession monitoring reports (Boarder and Immigration Agency 2007)<sup>39</sup>, which detail A8 registrations to the Worker Registration Scheme (WRS), indicate that more A8 workers have been registered to the scheme in the North of England than in London and the South East.

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<sup>37</sup> Oscar Wilde: *The Soul of Man under Socialism and Selected Critical Prose*. Penguin Books, London 2001, p.141.

<sup>38</sup> Hull City Council (2005) *The Northern Way: Hull and Humber Ports City Region Development Programme*, joint Hull City, East Riding of Yorkshire, North East Lincolnshire and North Lincolnshire Councils document, May 2005.

<sup>39</sup> Boarder and Immigration Agency (2007) *Accession Monitoring Report A8 Countries May 2004 – December 2007*, a joint Border and Immigration Agency, Department for Work and Pensions, HM Revenue and Customs and Communities and Local Government online report. Available at [http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/aboutus/Reports/accession\\_monitoring\\_report/](http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/aboutus/Reports/accession_monitoring_report/)

New migration to the Region raises three interlinked questions. First, how many A8 migrants and in particular the Poles have come to the Region, second, what sectors and employment are they likely to be working in and last how long are they likely to stay.

### ***1.1 Extent of Polish Migration to the Region***

With regard to extent there have been a number of claims and counter claims, not including the far from helpful way some of the UK media have dealt with this situation. For example at a recent Polish government seminar<sup>40</sup> the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that 1.5m Poles had emigrated to EU countries, particularly the UK and Ireland. At a UK level confusion and consternation over migration has been fuelled by outmoded methods of data collection. Government statisticians are aware of this and an Improving Migration and Population Statistics project (IMPS)<sup>41</sup> is currently underway to improve the situation. But there are two significant reference points for A8 migration data. Firstly, the quarterly accession monitoring reports, and secondly, the National Insurance Number Allocations/Registrations (NINo) of overseas nationals entering the UK<sup>42</sup>.

As readers maybe aware the accession monitoring reports provide data on those A8 workers who are employed in the UK. This data does, though, carry a number of

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<sup>40</sup> This seminar, *Economic Migration in the European Union – Problems and Challenges*, was held in Warsaw on the 24<sup>th</sup> September 2007. It was granted the honorary patronage of both the President of Poland and the President of Portugal. Its purpose was to launch the most comprehensive report so far on A8 migration to EU countries. The report by Jo Carby-Hall (2007) *The Treatment of Polish and Other A8 Economic Migrants in the European Union Member States*, report for the Commissioner for Civil Rights Protection of the Republic of Poland, can be obtained from the author (Jo Carby-Hall) or via the author of this report (Ian Fitzgerald – [ian.fitzgerald@unn.ac.uk](mailto:ian.fitzgerald@unn.ac.uk)).

<sup>41</sup> Further information can be obtained via the following link  
<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/data/methodology/specific/population/future/imps/default.asp>

<sup>42</sup> Available at [http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/niall/nino\\_allocation.asp](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/niall/nino_allocation.asp)



provisos. First it is based only on those workers who are employed in the country and of course these have to register<sup>43</sup>, it does not include those who are self-employed. Second, it details the location of employers, not the residence of A8 workers themselves. Third, the data is cumulative and does not exclude those who have left the country and when workers have registered for a year they no longer have to register. Also when discussing regional differences it is important to state that only the first registered employment is recorded, although re-registrations are noted. So if a worker registers in London and then moves to the North this is not highlighted or vice-versa. Lastly, a further complication for Yorkshire and the Humber and the North East is that the reports merge the two RDAs (Yorkshire Forward and One NorthEast) concealing more than they reveal at a regional level. To overcome this last barrier the author using freedom of information has obtained the data for the locality covered by One NorthEast. This reveals that the One NorthEast region (Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, County Durham, and Tees Valley) only accounted for just over a ninth of the regional North East total given in the May 2004 to September 2007 accession monitoring report. Therefore it can be estimated that from May 2004 to September 2007 that approaching 64,000 A8 workers had been registered in the Yorkshire Forward region.

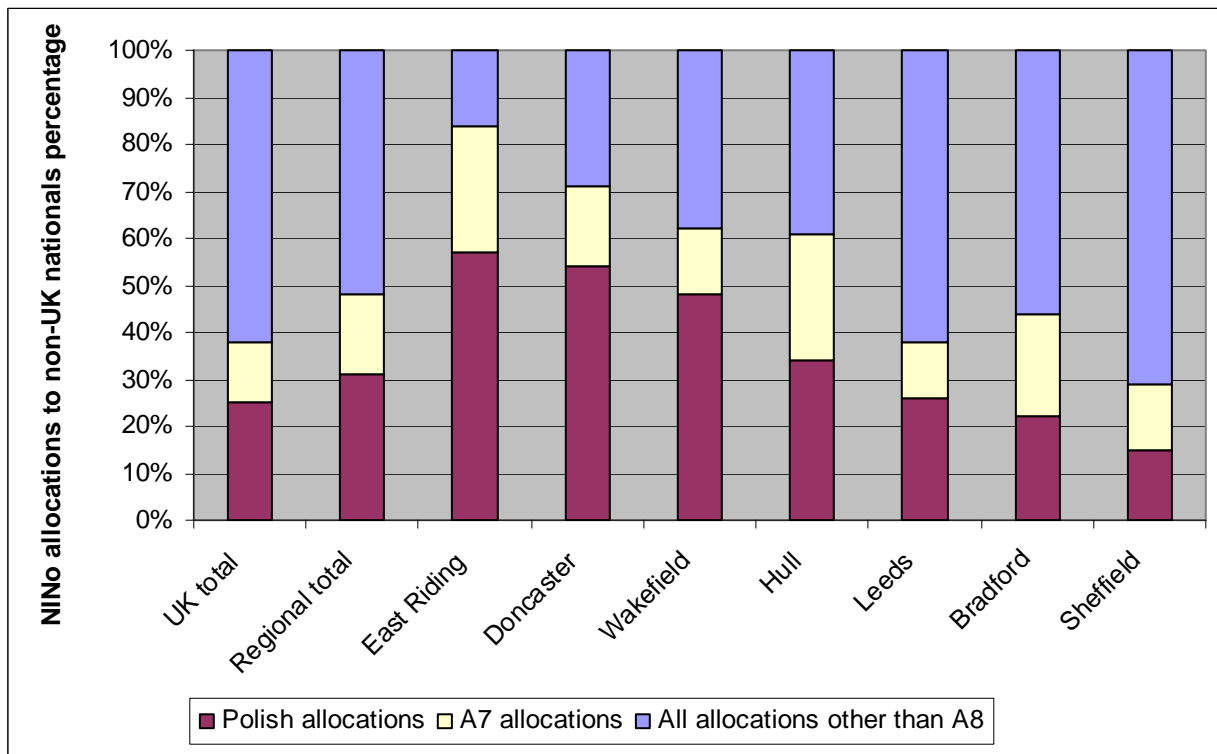
The NINo allocations to non-UK nationals allow a clearer picture of where Poles are living at a local level. The NINo data, through, also has its limitations and does not show when overseas nationals depart the UK or how long they stay in the UK. The NINo figures from mid-2004 to mid-2007 reveal that during this period over 47,430 A8s, of which 30,560 (64% of A8s) were Polish, had been allocated national insurance

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<sup>43</sup> A number of A8 migrants to the UK have not registered to the scheme due to lack of information. See Ian Fitzgerald (2007a: 2) *Working in the UK: Polish migrant worker routes into employment in the North East and North West construction and food processing sectors*, London: TUC. Available at <http://www.tuc.org.uk/international/tuc-13241-f0.pdf>, for further discussion.

numbers in the Region. The difference in overall A8 numbers between the WRS and NINo figures is likely to be due to regional movements of registered workers or the delay in both workers applying for a national insurance number or being issued with one. Graph One (below) reveals that the Poles now make up approximately twenty-five per cent of all UK NINo allocations to non-UK nationals.

Graph One: NINo allocations to non-UK nationals – mid-2004 to mid 2007<sup>44</sup>



Although, when this is broken down into national groupings it is revealed that since accession in 2004 the Poles have been the dominant nationality, with greater numbers being allocated national insurance numbers in each of the three periods<sup>45</sup>. This has been mirrored at a Regional level. Overall since 2004 Polish workers have accounted for approximately thirty-one percent of all non-UK Regional allocations (Graph One). The

<sup>44</sup> Department of Work and Pensions mid 2004-mid 2007.

<sup>45</sup> There have been three periods since accession; 2004-2005, 2005-2006 and 2006-2007.

largest numbers of Poles (19,830) are resident in Bradford, Doncaster, the East Riding of Yorkshire, Hull, Leeds, Sheffield, and Wakefield. Within these localities only Doncaster and the East Riding of Yorkshire have seen a slight decrease in the numbers of Poles being allocated NINo numbers for the last 2006-07 period, ten per cent and seven per cent respectively. Whilst all other areas witnessed significant rises, with Bradford increasing the number of Polish allocations by over one-hundred per cent. Interestingly, the numbers of A7<sup>46</sup> allocations went down in the 2006-2007 period both nationally and Regionally and of the largest cities and towns in the Region only in Bradford did A7 numbers rise.

This, though, may hide more than it reveals as small towns and villages have often been the recipients of newly arrived Polish and A8 workers. Until the data at a local level is refined, information is likely to be either patchy or based on intelligence received by trade union representatives in the field.

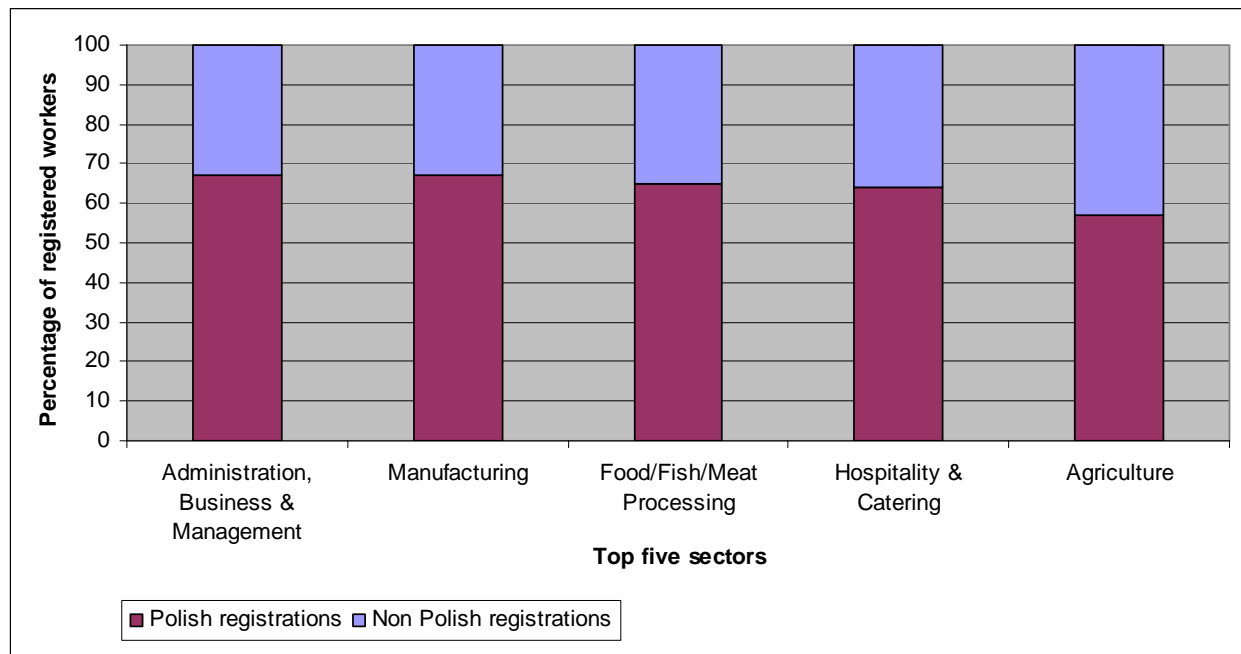
## ***1.2 The regional labour market and Polish workers***

Moving on to our second question of the labour market position of A8 and Polish workers, the accession monitoring report data cannot be disaggregated for the Region as there are likely to be differing prominent sectors in each RDA region. Instead Graph Two (below) gives the top five sectors where A8 workers are registered nationally and as can be seen the Poles dominate each.

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<sup>46</sup> The other Central and Eastern European countries other than Poland: Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia and Slovenia

Graph Two: Top five sectors where A8 and Polish workers are registered<sup>47</sup>



Regional interviewees did, though, note that new Polish workers in the Region were in some key sectors such as agriculture, construction, food processing, horticulture, manufacturing (foundries), packaging, printing and were moving into finance. The large numbers of Poles in these key sectors was commented on by the BFAWU District Organiser. He stated that there were hundreds of Poles on greenfield and recognised sites, *'....we were not aware so much of this until we began to organise a company and found 90% of their workers were foreign with 80% of those Poles'*.

Interestingly, the accession monitoring reports also reveal that the vast majority of registered workers (77%) are earning between £4.50 - £5.99 per hour. Significantly, for the movement some interviewees also spoke about 'displacement' of indigenous

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<sup>47</sup> Data from Boarder and Immigration Agency (2007) *Accession Monitoring Report A8 Countries May 2004 – September 2007*, a joint Border and Immigration Agency, Department for Work and Pensions, HM Revenue and Customs and Communities and Local Government online report. Available at [http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/aboutus/Reports/accession\\_monitoring\\_report/](http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/aboutus/Reports/accession_monitoring_report/)

workers and separate groups as new migrants, particularly the Poles were bought into workplaces at lower rates of pay:

*The employers know what they are doing. As long as they are within the law they don't care.* (ZPWB representative: Bradford)

*Some sectors are riddled with job displacement....employers don't care, it's all about exploitation and using people as cheap merchandise.* (Unite Amicus section official)

*We don't seem to have separate groups up here but down South there are real problems of separate groups and the Poles and the English never communicating.* (Usdaw full-time official)

*The issue is to have balance and I don't think companies are thinking about this, all it's about is money. It's a fact of life if they can get a job done for half the price they will do.* (Unite Amicus section official)

Given this both Unite Amicus section and Ucat interviewees specifically spoke of the importance of maintaining the 'rate-for-the-job'. It is clear what this means for indigenous workers, but even though UK wages are higher, and early expectations of A8 and Polish migrants may be that things are better in the UK than at home, there is often a nightmare awaiting many of these workers. An example in this study was given by an interviewee who stated that '*....there was a Polish worker employed as a barman at a night club and they were actually charging him to go into work. So £50 was taken off his wages each week!*' (Bradford Resource Centre: Community worker).

The recent Carby-Hall (2007)<sup>48</sup> report details the deplorable conditions large numbers of Polish workers are suffering. In particular Carby-Hall identifies that this nightmare is

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<sup>48</sup> Carby-Hall, J. (2007) *The Treatment of Polish and Other A8 Economic Migrants in the European Union Member States*, report for the Commissioner for Civil Rights Protection of the Republic of Poland.

built on a five part scenario. Firstly, beginning with the 'fear' that many A8 migrants display when questioned about exploitative conditions; secondly, that this is often difficult to challenge as A8 migrants are widely scattered in a number of economic sectors; thirdly, that some of the worst excesses of exploitation are akin to 'forced labour' and 'modern slavery'; fourthly, that actual abuse is multi-faced and can not be tied down to a single practice; and fifthly, that gangmasters and some employment agencies play a significant role in this and often have a dominant controlling interest, *'....we're going back to the 30s when people queued for jobs; we see that in Leeds everyday'* (Unite Amicus section full-time official). This author would strongly recommend that the lengthy Carby-Hall report is considered by those interested in A8 and migrant workers. It provides not only an excellent piece of dedicated work but has also been sanctioned by the Polish government and was welcomed by certain senior EU officials at its launch. It should therefore carry significant weight as evidence of the work that needs to be undertaken by government at all levels.

Whilst this current report was not intended to identify abusive practices it is worth highlighting one particular part of the Carby-Hall report. He cites a recent Joseph Rowntree Foundation project<sup>49</sup> which had an East Riding of Yorkshire case study involving both A8 forced labour and slavery. It seems that as a national Unite T&G section official recently commented when discussing the lack of policing and enforcement at migrant workers workplaces *'....unless we do this* (campaign for

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<sup>49</sup> Craig, G., Gaus, A., Wilkinson, M., Skrivonka, K. and McQuade, A. (2007) *Contemporary Slavery in the U.K.* University of Hull and Anti-Slavery International, February 2007. Available at <http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialpolicy/2035.asp>

legislation to be enforced) *more aggressively, I think it will be very difficult to change behaviour as these people are addicted to profit*<sup>50</sup>.

### **1.3 The transitory nature of Polish workers**

In discussing our final, transitory, question it is worth highlighting that this question now looms large on the horizon for many trade unions. A number of national level trade union officials are talking in particular about the transitory nature of many Poles and the influence this has on their organising strategies<sup>51</sup>. Interviewees for this project also spoke of this ‘....they are different from the post-war generation of Poles, these are clearly economic migrants’ (ZPWB representative: Bradford). However, we need to ask ourselves what transitory means. Commonly with regard to migration it relates to those workers who come to the UK and decide it is not for them and either return home or to another country. There are also those who come on a seasonal or short-term basis, for example Polish students in the labour market, the numerous cheap transport links to Poland are also important. In the same vein it can further relate to those who decide that the job they started with is not ideal and either move employer in the same locality or region or move to other regions<sup>52</sup>. Finally, many Polish and migrant workers are transported

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<sup>50</sup> Fitzgerald, I. and Hardy, J. (2007) *‘Thinking Outside the Box’: Trade Union Organising Strategies and Polish Migrant Workers in the UK*, paper presented at the International Industrial Relations Association, Manchester, 3rd – 6th September 2007.

<sup>51</sup> See Fitzgerald, I. and Hardy, J. (2007) *‘Thinking Outside the Box’: Trade Union Organising Strategies and Polish Migrant Workers in the UK*, paper presented at the International Industrial Relations Association, Manchester, 3rd – 6th September 2007.

<sup>52</sup> See Fitzgerald, I. (2006) *Organising Migrant Workers in Construction: Experience from the North East of England*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Northern TUC. He discusses the movement of construction workers from the North East to the North West following Polish workers finding out that ‘friends’ in other Regions where earning more money.

from cities, small towns or villages to employers many miles away<sup>53</sup>. All of these situations are a challenge to trade unions not only from the point of view of engagement but importantly how people are 'serviced' once they have joined the union:

*....when we recruit people now, we try to get them to take out a direct debit so that when they move employer they take their unionism with them. We seriously had to think about this with our strategy because we would never have got them back again. (Unite T&G section senior Regional official)*

The following briefly discusses these issues and the important issue of the drivers of migration.

To take drivers of migration first, these are clearly complex and can involve a number of issues in home (push) and receiver (pull) countries. For example government laws and policies, the UK decision to accept A8 migration following accession and potentially the recent Polish government decision to set-up a number of working groups to encourage their citizens to come home;<sup>54</sup> labour market conditions in each country; established migrant networks where information is passed back to the receiver country; or the wish, often of younger EU migrants, to experience a new country or lifestyle, with spoken English important here.

Employer demand for migrant labour is a significant pull factor and a number of reports have highlighted the dominant role that agencies and direct employer recruitment have with regard to Polish workers. Often, through adverts and 'job fairs' in Poland (see

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<sup>53</sup> See Ian Fitzgerald (2006) again as he discusses Polish construction workers travelling approximately 40 miles a day round trip to work. He also notes anecdotal evidence of Polish and Indian construction workers being transported from the Midlands to Teesside everyday to work. Workers were apparently charged for this 'service'.

<sup>54</sup> Highlighted by the Polish Department of Immigration at the recent seminar *The Economic Migration in the European Union – Problems and Challenges*.



Selby District Council 2006<sup>55</sup> who cite this as a main reason for Polish migration to the area; and Fitzgerald 2007a for further discussion of this with regard to the Poles in the North of England). Further, a recent British Chambers of Commerce<sup>56</sup> survey reports that seventy-five per cent of business respondents recognised that migration was not only beneficial to the economy but that sixty-one percent of respondents had employed migrant workers in the past year (BCC 2007: p2). It also gave the main reasons why employers recruited migrant workers, with a supposedly 'better work ethic' (23.3%) and 'migrants being more productive' (17.4%) coming high on the agenda. 'Short supply of candidates with required skills' (25.6%) was the most frequent reason given and 'lower wage costs' (5.9%) the second least frequent reason given. The evidence in certain low wage sectors would seem to tell a different story with regard to low wage costs. Finally it is worth noting the role of EURES the network of public employment services and partners within the European economic area (EEA). It is based on a database of vacancies and information, administered in the UK, for example, by Jobcentre Plus, overall the service seeks to facilitate the free movement of workers within the EEA<sup>57</sup>. At the Polish government seminar highlighted earlier, a senior EU speaker spoke of the need to facilitate a 'better fit' between EURES and the current A8 migration. This is perhaps an indication that the agency so far has not been a key player in A8 recruitment. Other labour market issues are the Polish economy and interestingly late last year the Observer<sup>58</sup> noted that in one area of Poland, following EU funding and multinational

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<sup>55</sup> Selby District Council (2006) *The Parish Perspective*, Selby District Council's quarterly newsletter for Parish and Town Councillors and Clerks, Volume 2, Issue 1, December 2006.

<sup>56</sup> BCC (2007) *Migration: Plugging the Gap*, report prepared by the British Chambers of Commerce, February 2007.

<sup>57</sup> The TUC adviser to EURES early this year was Les Ford (email: lford.sertuc@virgin.net).

<sup>58</sup> Taylor, J. (2006) *The rebirth of Lodz draws Poland's young emigrants back*, Independent, 28 October, p. 30.

investment, some Poles were 'going home'. But the likelihood of this is unsure given the current low level of wages in Poland, which although improving, can be four or five times less in some UK sectors. However, given the types of appalling conditions for many in the UK and other European destinations higher wages may not be either a real or large enough incentive. In the UK the issue of Polish workers travelling long distances to work is important but as yet no clear data that the author knows of exists. With regard to Polish and A8 migrants moving employment, data is available. For example, even though in some locations and sectors of the economy Polish workers have been identified as being brought into core employment<sup>59</sup>, the reality is of high levels of temporary employment for A8 migrants (see Boarder and Immigration Agency 2007 and Cam 2007)<sup>60</sup>. The most recent accession monitoring report<sup>61</sup> identifies that over half of all registered A8 workers were in temporary employment. It also details that since May 2004 there have been 257,465 applications to re-register from A8s who had originally registered with one employer but had now re-registered with another employer; 6,000 multiple registrations of those working for more than one employer at the same time; and 60,565 multiple re-registrations, that is those registering for

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<sup>59</sup> Fitzgerald (2007a and 2006) highlights this with regard to construction in the North East and food processing in both the North East and North West. Although, actual numbers of workers becoming 'permanent' were not high compared to the overall numbers of Polish workers.

<sup>60</sup> Boarder and Immigration Agency (2007) *Accession Monitoring Report A8 Countries May 2004 – December 2007*, a joint Border and Immigration Agency, Department for Work and Pensions, HM Revenue and Customs and Communities and Local Government online report. Available at [http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/aboutus/Reports/accession\\_monitoring\\_report/](http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/aboutus/Reports/accession_monitoring_report/); and Cam, S. (2007) *Temporary Employment among the EU Migrants in Britain*, paper presented to a migrant worker seminar at Cardiff University.

<sup>61</sup> Boarder and Immigration Agency (2007) *Accession Monitoring Report A8 Countries May 2004 – December 2007*, a joint Border and Immigration Agency, Department for Work and Pensions, HM Revenue and Customs and Communities and Local Government online report. Available at [http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/aboutus/Reports/accession\\_monitoring\\_report/](http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/aboutus/Reports/accession_monitoring_report/)

subsequent jobs, additional jobs, or A8s who had left their original employer and were re-registering for more than one job (Boarder and Immigration Agency 2007: 7).

Temporary employment and job change, though, may not affect location as Polish workers become embedded in communities. Given this the importance of migratory chains should be highlighted. With regard to this a recent piece of regionally based research<sup>62</sup> identified the roles played by these migratory chains/networks. These *'....include the provision of information and social support. ...Practical assistance, such as accommodation and, particularly for potential entrepreneurs, finance'* (ibid: 20). A recent Communities Scotland (2007) report confirms this in Grampian with regard to the Poles<sup>63</sup>. Whilst Fitzgerald (2006 and 2007a)<sup>64</sup> has discussed this in the North with regard to the Poles in the construction and food processing sectors. Interestingly, Fitzgerald (2007a) highlights the growing importance of those friends and families already resident here.

Finally, the question must be asked 'what is the current evidence we have of new Polish settlement'. Although, some interviewees felt it was too early to answer this question *'I think people are still getting used to living in the UK. I think we have to wait until people feel more confident until we will really know'* (Unite T&G section senior Regional official).

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<sup>62</sup> Experian (2006) *"Attracting Talent" migration study: stage 3*, a study for Yorkshire Forward, the Humber Economic Forum, North West Development Agency, the Welsh Assembly Government, Skills for Care, Skills for Health and the Department of Trade and Industry's Small Business Service, September 2006.

<sup>63</sup> De Lima, P., Chaudhry, M.M., Whelton, R. and Arshad, R. (2007) *A study of migrant workers in Grampian*, report for Communities Scotland, July 2007

<sup>64</sup> Fitzgerald, I. (2007a: 2) *Working in the UK: Polish migrant worker routes into employment in the North East and North West construction and food processing sectors*, London: TUC.; and Fitzgerald, I. (2006) *Organising Migrant Workers in Construction: Experience from the North East of England*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Northern TUC

Polish community representatives gave some interesting comments when asked about this:

*I believe that a sizable number will stay; they think it is far, far better to live here than in Poland and by and large they have integrated quite well. But the majority are only looking to stay for 2-3 years and build homes back in Poland.* (ZPWB representative: Bradford)

*We have started a Polish circle, we meet once a week and talk about Polish movies or poems the idea being to discuss something from Polish culture. This happens in peoples homes at the moment.* (Polish community activist)

*People tell me that they will stay for two to three years but I think many will stay longer once settled. The Bradford Polish School has increased its numbers four times and this is a national picture.* (ZPWB representative: Leeds)

This last comment is significant given the importance of children and family reunification, when discussing long-term settlement. As well as the Polish 'cultural circle' noted above a number of other similar cultural networks are being set-up to engage with the newly arrived Polish migrants<sup>65</sup>. The Yorkshire Forward website further reports that North Yorkshire County Council libraries (in Ripon, Scarborough and Selby) have made available a number of Polish language books, this followed an increasing number of Poles borrowing learning materials '*to try to improve their ability to communicate with new friends and colleagues in the Region*'<sup>66</sup>. Noteworthy here are also the

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<sup>65</sup> See Carby-Hall, J. (2007) *The Treatment of Polish and Other A8 Economic Migrants in the European Union Member States*, report for the Commissioner for Civil Rights Protection of the Republic of Poland. for further information.

<sup>66</sup> Dated the 19/10/2006 and available at [http://www.yorkshire-forward.com/www/view.asp?content\\_id=4557&parent\\_id=263](http://www.yorkshire-forward.com/www/view.asp?content_id=4557&parent_id=263)

growing number of news-sheets and papers being distributed and websites, discussed later. Lastly, it is significant that a growing number of Polish food shops are springing-up in the North of England<sup>67</sup>.

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<sup>67</sup> See Yorkshire Forward website for further information on this in the Region. Available at [http://www.yorkshire-forward.com/www/view\\_search.asp?content\\_type\\_id=1&search=Polish+food](http://www.yorkshire-forward.com/www/view_search.asp?content_type_id=1&search=Polish+food)

## 2. The need for information and integration

If the movement wants to engage with Polish migrant workers, it must pose itself the question, following the arrival of Polish migrants to the Region what do they require and how far can trade unions assist with meeting these needs? The issue then becomes how are these needs to be met, and what is actually out there to assist with this at local, regional, national and international levels. It is significant to note that since accession to the EU, UK research reports for government, trade unions and other agencies have consistently identified that one of the first things people require is information. As an interviewee stated '*....we need to give Polish and other migrant workers as much information as possible. To make them aware of their rights*' (Bradford Resource Centre: Community worker). This section details what a number of the information requirements have been, including those noted by interviewees. Before, though, discussing specific informational requirements, three main issues need to be highlighted.

First, it is perhaps obvious to note that informational requirements may change in importance, develop or be different as Poles become embedded into communities. For example the initial need for information on how to obtain national insurance numbers and register for the WRS may diminish and other areas such as questions concerning driving licences or other commonly thought of needs become more important. Requirements may also be different depending on the location or sector of work of Poles. Of further significance here are likely to be the growing number of Polish electronic media and websites (at least 40)<sup>68</sup> that provide information for their 'readers', these cover UK national, regional and local terrains.

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<sup>68</sup> Fitzgerald, I. (2007) *Polish internet recourses for the UK and Eire*, unpublished document, March 2007.

Second having said this, the issue is then access to this information, and some reports have argued for a central point or portal for information provision<sup>69</sup>. This is clearly important but there is also a need to connect in a more flexible way, allowing engagement with communities on a number of levels (this is discussed in Section Three). Lastly and importantly tied to community engagement is the significance of Polish integration into local communities and mutual acceptance on the parts of newly arrived Polish and indigenous workers. There can sometimes be problems that arise in communities when newly arrived Poles are not aware of the culture and customs in particular areas. Of course there is also the other side of this coin which is the racism and hostility that some Poles have experienced. These central cohesion issues may often be a major driver of whether Poles will remain in a locality.

With regard to integration, the Commission on Integration and Cohesion<sup>70</sup> final report on migrants to the UK, notes that the '*....government must accept that they need to do more to welcome and integrate new migrants. (So they are) able to participate fully in the labour market and their local communities*' (2007: p67). It also goes on to state that '*....there is currently no single place in Government responsible for helping to address ...barriers*' (ibid: p67)<sup>71</sup>. The Commission specifically identify information as a key driver of integration.

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<sup>69</sup> De Lima, P., Chaudhry, M.M., Whelton, R. and Arshad, R. (2007) *A study of migrant workers in Grampian*, report for Communities Scotland, July 2007; MISO (no date: 6) *Supporting Migrant Workers in the North West of England*, Merseyside Social Inclusion Observatory briefing paper 8.

<sup>70</sup> Commission on Integration and Cohesion (2007) *Our Shared Future*, Commission on Integration and Cohesion, June 2007. Available at <http://www.integrationandcohesion.org.uk/>

<sup>71</sup> In the Commission report it does note that '*the Home Office has announced it will establish a Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) to advise Ministers on where migration might sensibly fill gaps in the labour market. The Government is also establishing a new Migration Impacts Forum (MIF), which will provide information on the wider impacts of migration on local communities and how best to ensure public services can respond and community cohesion retained. These two bodies are a good start, but we believe more can be done*'. (Commission on Integration and Cohesion 2007: p68)

They highlight a MORI study 'What Works' in Community Cohesion<sup>72</sup> which identifies that often new arrivals' lack of information on the UK and importantly the location where they live meant that their risk of exclusion was much greater. They also highlight Vertovec's<sup>73</sup> study as confirming this with regard to A8 migrants who were found not to have essential information including their rights and entitlements and immigration status (Commission on Integration and Cohesion 2007: 70). The immigration status point is interesting given that this might be something that would have been expected to have changed with A8 accession to the EU and the publicity surrounding it. Interestingly, though, following recent discussions with a Polish trade unionist for this project. He stated that a key requirement was information on registering to the WRS. This is an important issue if A8 migrants are to be encouraged to stay. A8s applying for UK citizenship must have proof of status through the WRS. If people have not registered they are not considered to have been in the UK and need a year's registration on the scheme before applying for UK resident status.

As noted above these barriers around integration include not only information for migrants, including how to live in the UK but most importantly of all can include the racism and hostility of the indigenous UK population. Carby-Hall (2007: 260) for example reports how a Polish women and her daughter, living near Hull, were 'severely assaulted' on more than one occasion as neighbours blamed them for taking local peoples jobs. They were also verbally abused in their home and had their car damaged. To counter this type of aggression unions are developing their anti-racist policies to include Polish workers. For example, the GMB in Southampton have introduced a

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<sup>72</sup> MORI (2007) *'What Works' in Community Cohesion*, study for the Commission on Integration and Cohesion 2007.

<sup>73</sup> Vertovec, S. (2007) *New Complexities of Cohesion in Britain*, think piece for the Commission on Integration and Cohesion 2007.



Polish holding branch. This is a temporary place for new Polish members to gain confidence before taking part in the wider branch structure in their locality. Part of this innovative approach is a recognition that new Polish members may find it initially difficult at both work and in their union branches. As the new Polish branch secretary has stated:

*....‘they come over here to take our jobs’ has been a common theme of many tabloid newspapers, very often justified by saying that immigrants drive wages down. There was no mention of the bad conditions and struggle that those workers have to go through in order to make a living here in Britain.... Our branch is an inspiration for the burgeoning migrant workers’ trade unions not only in the UK but also in other parts of Europe. We are already rolling out the strategy by establishing links with Polish Solidarnosc, as well as Swedish and Greek trade unions. Our principle is to make it possible for the workers to self-organise, by gaining skills, confidence and the knowledge needed in order to integrate into British life. (Paulina Tomasik GMB Polish branch secretary)<sup>74</sup>*

Also in the North East region Unite Amicus section are undertaking a number of regular evening sessions with activists to ‘dispel the myths over migration’, the author has taken part in these as an academic expert and the most successful session so far has involved the use of a Unite T&G section Polish trade unionist who told his story of coming to the North East region and settling. Bfawu have also recently commissioned a report<sup>75</sup>, in the food processing sector, on the attitudes of those with English as a second language to trade union membership. This not surprisingly involved a large number of A8 and

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<sup>74</sup> Paulina Tomasik (2007) *Making a difference to the lives of Polish workers*, University of Southampton, April 2007.

<sup>75</sup> Campaign Company (2007) *Membership Diversity*, an unpublished Union Modernisation Fund research project report.

Polish workers. The final report encouraged the union to engage with employers to introduce diversity and equality training at a workplace level. Finally, whilst undertaking this report one worrying sign around integration was highlighted. An USDAW interviewee noted that at some sites they had real problems of racism from the Poles to Iraqi workers, who came on site for temporary periods when there was an upturn in production. A Unite Amicus section official confirmed this 'trend' stating that *'....we're working with the Polish club in Leeds because we think that the far right are trying to target the Poles to get them to join'*. A Regional interviewee also reported that there had recently been an informal meeting between the UK BNP and Polish fascists in London to build links. It, though, would be wrong to end this sub-section on this note and it can be reported that the recently formed, Polish inspired, 'Hull Together' community group has held meetings with both Poles and Filipinos and is carrying out development work with other migrant groups<sup>76</sup>. The following now highlights some of the more specific informational requirements that have been identified for Polish workers.

## ***2.1 Specific informational requirements***

In interviews with Polish community activists a number of specific information needs were detailed, although it is clear that a larger scale study is needed if the distinct locational and sectorial informational requirements of Polish workers in the Region are to be captured. As the ZPWB representative in Bradford commented *'any information is useful'*. The actual specific needs of Poles were considered by Polish activists to be broad information on employment rights, including for example the minimum wage, holiday entitlement and other specific rights at work. Not surprisingly, information on

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<sup>76</sup> Commission for Rural Communities (2007) Rural Migrant Worker Projects: Hull Together!, publication by the Commission for Rural Communities, 26th March 2007. Available at <http://www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/publications/ruralmigrantworkersprojectswesthull>

accommodation was considered important and issues around banking. Areas highlighted that are possibly moving into integration and possible longer-term settlement were how to obtain driving licences; benefits and importantly information on education (a major issue in Bradford).

Underpinning all of this, as the movement is well aware, is the need for English language classes and this came through again in this study. This has been highlighted in a growing number of studies<sup>77</sup>, importantly the de Lima et al (2007: 47)<sup>78</sup> study for Communities Scotland notes '*...evidence across the UK....suggests that despite trades unions, employers and local authorities providing English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes, the language needs of migrant workers are still not being met*'<sup>79</sup> (ibid: 12). With Government policy now seemingly moving in the opposite direction and making it even more difficult for migrant and Polish workers to access free ESOL training there were real fears expressed by interviewees that this situation was unlikely to get any easier.

Before moving on it is also worth highlighting some Regional examples which have dealt with information and support needs. The Regional multi-agency (including trade unions) forum *Selby Together* was formed following the lead of the church (I&Dea 2007:

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<sup>77</sup> See for example de Lima, P., Chaudhry, M.M., Whelton, R. and Arshad, R. (2007) *A study of migrant workers in Grampian*, report for Communities Scotland, July 2007; I&DEA (2007) *New European Migration: Good Practice Guide for Local Authorities, Communities and Local Government* and Institute of Community Cohesion, June 2007; MISO (no date: 6) *Supporting Migrant Workers in the North West of England*, Merseyside Social Inclusion Observatory briefing paper 8.

<sup>78</sup> De Lima, P., Chaudhry, M.M., Whelton, R. and Arshad, R. (2007) *A study of migrant workers in Grampian*, report for Communities Scotland, July 2007.

<sup>79</sup> Scottish Economic Research (2006) *Tayside migrant labour population study*, Communities Scotland, Edinburgh; Cooke, S. and Spencer, S. (2006) *Background briefing for a conference on 'Integration of Migrants: Engaging employers, unions and the voluntary sector'*, Central London, 4 July; McIlwaine, N. (2006) *Migrant Worker Presentation –The Foyle Food Group*, presentation at the Integration of Migrants: Engaging employers, unions and the voluntary sector conference, Central London, 4 July 2006.

14<sup>80</sup>). To further its aims of how to improve services for migrant workers it distributed a Polish language questionnaire<sup>81</sup> at places of work, colleges and wherever training was provided. The results of the questionnaire were a need for both written and spoken language support; accommodation, banking and healthcare advice; issues around childcare, jobs and benefits; and information on adult education and leisure. This then led to the development of a welcome pack which is briefly discussed later (see also Appendix One). A further piece of work<sup>82</sup>, which borders on the Region, in South Lincolnshire also detailed the specific informational needs of migrant workers particularly those from the A8 counties. In this report the authors note the need for translated documents relating to '*legal requirements in the UK and about migrant workers' responsibilities (DVLA, MOT, recycling information); access to services (health care; school system, childcare, transport, waste disposal); the benefit system, tax credit and pension schemes*'. They also highlight a need for translated documents such as application, school and hospital forms and the need to encourage employers to assist migrants with opening bank accounts and the need to introduce new arrivals to the Credit Union (Zaronaite and Tirzite 2006: 110). Above and consistently in other research Polish and migrant needs go beyond the normal remit of trade unions. This can pose challenges for trade unions, around the delivery of these needs and the trust of Poles if issues are not resolved by other service providers.

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<sup>80</sup> I&DEA (2007) *New European Migration: Good Practice Guide for Local Authorities, Communities and Local Government* and Institute of Community Cohesion, June 2007

<sup>81</sup> Poles were identified as the dominant group (85% of migrants) following a mapping study of the area.

<sup>82</sup> Zaronaite, D. and Tirzite, A. (2006) *The Dynamics of Migrant Labour in South Lincolnshire*, a report funded by the East Midland Development Agency and Lincolnshire Enterprise, published by South Holland District Council.

It is also worth highlighting the importance of friends, family and co-worker networks for providing information to Polish workers (see Fitzgerald 2007a<sup>83</sup>). De Lima et al (2007: 47)<sup>84</sup>, however, comment that even though this was considered important by A8 workers many also noted the potential danger here as inaccurate or incomplete information can and is sometimes given.

## **2.2 Information initiatives**

So what information is actually available for Polish migrants and how can it be accessed? The following briefly highlights a number of initiatives including welcomepacks, websites and webpages, drop-in sessions and telephone lines, many of these are given more attention in Section Three of this report.

**Welcome Packs:** There have been a range of these types of information resource. They can be packs with an amount of useful material in them or short precise documents with key details given. Details in packs can include both living in the locality type information, for example details on accommodation and tenancy; local libraries; and local council and NHS services. As well as employment rights and health and safety at work information. The recent Commission on Integration and Cohesion (2007: 70)<sup>85</sup> recommends that the department of Communities and Local Government develop a sample welcome pack which is based on current good practice. At a Regional level examples of welcome packs are the *East Riding Welcome Pack*<sup>86</sup> which is a two-page

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<sup>83</sup> Ian Fitzgerald (2007a) *Working in the UK: Polish migrant worker routes into employment in the North East and North West construction and food processing sectors*, London: TUC.

<sup>84</sup> De Lima, P., Chaudhry, M.M., Whelton, R. and Arshad, R. (2007) *A study of migrant workers in Grampian*, report for Communities Scotland, July 2007.

<sup>85</sup> Commission on Integration and Cohesion (2007) *Our Shared Future*, Commission on Integration and Cohesion, June 2007.

<sup>86</sup> [http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/migrantworkers/downloads/east\\_riding\\_welcome\\_pack.pdf](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/migrantworkers/downloads/east_riding_welcome_pack.pdf)

document giving basic information and details of support or contact lines. The paper version is currently in English only but is available in Polish as a webpage via the East Riding of Yorkshire Council website<sup>87</sup>. A Council official commented (interview) that they are currently in collaboration with other Humberside councils and are now close to producing a new multi-lingual welcome pack<sup>88</sup>. Whilst at least 3,000 copies of the *Hull Together! Welcome Pack* have been distributed<sup>89</sup>. Finally, the *Selby Together Welcome Pack* has been produced loose-leaf so that information updates, distributed on a six monthly basis<sup>90</sup>, and more localised information, such as refuse collection can be inserted. The pack again covers a range of issues including housing, tenancy, health entitlements, education and emergency service information (see Appendix One). With regard to this pack an important point was made at a recent Social Inclusion Conference in the Region<sup>91</sup>. It was noted that because this pack was only in Polish and English it could cause inter community racial problems. A conclusion was that given this where possible welcome packs should be in a variety of languages<sup>92</sup>. De Lima et al. (2007: 47)<sup>93</sup> also note two main issues whilst discussing a Grampian welcome pack. First the

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<sup>87</sup> [http://www.eastriding.gov.uk/migrant\\_workers/polish.html](http://www.eastriding.gov.uk/migrant_workers/polish.html)

<sup>88</sup> There is currently a sub-regional partnership involving Hull City Council, East Riding Council and North and North East Lincolnshire Councils. This has a number of work streams including one on migrant workers which is due to publish the welcome pack.

<sup>89</sup> The trade unions are well aware of these developments as the Regional TUC has been increasingly involved in activities with the Polish community in Hull.

<sup>90</sup> I&DEA (2007) *New European Migration: Good Practice Guide for Local Authorities, Communities and Local Government* and Institute of Community Cohesion, June 2007

<sup>91</sup> York and North Yorkshire Multi-agency Black Minority and Ethnic Social Inclusion Conference, 21 March 2007.

<sup>92</sup> Conference workshop discussions at the York and North Yorkshire Multi-agency Black Minority and Ethnic Social Inclusion Conference, 21 March 2007.

<sup>93</sup> De Lima, P., Chaudhry, M.M., Whelton, R. and Arshad, R. (2007) *A study of migrant workers in Grampian*, report for Communities Scotland, July 2007.

authors note that consideration should be given to questions of access and knowledge of packs. Second the translated Polish was identified by Polish interviewees for their study as very poor. There was also a further problem over language as no information was given of what services or organisations/agencies provided language facilities. However, the authors of that report make clear that most Polish migrants spoken to were thankful for this type of initiative.

**Websites and web based information:** The web is becoming an important feature of modern life and with regard to migrant workers the TUC has for a while had the WorkingSmart website<sup>94</sup>, though this is in English only. But it does have a link to a Polish version of the 'Working in the UK: Know your rights' booklet<sup>95</sup>. It also has a link to the Citizens Signpost Service<sup>96</sup> which is a free EU website aimed at EU citizens who encounter problems with mobility in the European Internal Market. This EU website provides an advisory service giving guidance on practical advice to EU citizens on specific problems they might encounter whilst involved in the EU internal market. Significantly, following a recent launch the TUC in conjunction with Solidarnosc and the CAB now have a Polish language website<sup>97</sup>. At a more localised level another innovative development in the North West of England has been the trade union led Migrant Workers North West (MWNW) one-stop-shop website<sup>98</sup>. This provides information for migrant workers and organisations, NGOs and employers dealing with

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<sup>94</sup> <http://www.worksmart.org.uk/rights/viewsubsection.php?sun=82> The TUC also now provide the joint TUC, Solidarnosc and CAB website.

<sup>95</sup> The booklet is meant to be distributed via the Home Office to recently arrived A8 migrants to the UK, although a senior TUC official has noted that this has not always occurred.

<sup>96</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/citizensrights/>

<sup>97</sup> <http://www.pracawbrytanii.org> For further details see <http://www.tuc.org.uk/international/tuc-13869-f0.cfm>

<sup>98</sup> <http://www.migrantworkersnorthwest.org/>

migrant workers. Currently, though, the website is only in English but it was reported that there are future plans to offer other languages. Other wider examples of webpages in the Region are the one administered by Barnsley Council<sup>99</sup>. This has a wealth of local, regional and important general information for new arrivals. This includes links to locally based trade unions. The webpage can be accessed in Polish but many Polish parts are still under construction. It has been funded under the Invest to Save Budget<sup>100</sup>. Bradford<sup>101</sup> also has available from its website a fairly comprehensive introduction to the town in Polish, which includes information on employment rights and the TUC.

***Drop-in centres and drop-in sessions:*** Another way to provide information and engage with Polish workers is through differing forms of **drop-in sessions**. For example the GMB, as apart of their collaborative 'Reaching Out to New Communities' project<sup>102</sup>, have run a series of drop-in sessions to give help and advice to migrant workers. Whilst in Penrith (Cumbria) the Police and local council combined to make use of a housing association foyer which was being regularly used by migrant workers. This provides a good example of how there are wider opportunities to develop what may currently be one-off or irregular opportunities for engagement. In this case migrants were using the foyer to access a free internet resource. To develop this the Police funded a Polish web based forum<sup>103</sup>, whilst the centre was also used to provide ESOL classes as migrant

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<sup>99</sup> [http://www.barnsley.gov.uk/bguk/New\\_Arrivals](http://www.barnsley.gov.uk/bguk/New_Arrivals)

<sup>100</sup> The Invest to Save Budget (ISB) is a government fund which amongst other things is seeking to '...forge new alliances, create partnerships and promote innovation'. It funds a range of projects including the Barnsley 'Investing in a "Multi-Cultural Barnsley" project.

<sup>101</sup> [http://www.bradford.gov.uk/life\\_in\\_the\\_community/neighbourhood\\_forums/district-diversity/](http://www.bradford.gov.uk/life_in_the_community/neighbourhood_forums/district-diversity/)

<sup>102</sup> This was a collaborative project with Prospects Services Ltd and further details can found at the following link: <http://www.epolitix.com/EN/Forums/GMB/PressReleases/200511/11404e3f-41a8-47d3-872d-f392b702dce7.htm>

<sup>103</sup> <http://www.cumbria.prv.pl/>



workers found it hard to get to a local college. Finally, the council set-up regular advice surgeries. It is reported that other organisations are now seeking to form contacts with migrants when these language classes are provided<sup>104</sup>. Section Three discusses the use of these types of sessions in the Region further.

*Telephone helplines:* Have also been identified by a number of projects as useful (see de Lima et al. 2007; Fitzgerald 2007a; MSIO 2006)<sup>105</sup>. Unions have engaged with these, for example there is a WorkingSmart telephone helpline<sup>106</sup> but as with the website it is in English and when contacted a 'worker' said they did not have access to interpretation facilities or information in Polish to send out to people. They instead said people would be directed to the TUC WorkingSmart website which had a Polish information document on it. Cost is clearly an issue here and of course focus, which languages are to be interpreted and which not? With regard to wider informational assistance through telephone helplines, the Telephone Helplines Association<sup>107</sup> provides information on non-profit helplines, including some relating to interpretation. At a Regional level the East Riding of Yorkshire Council have a phone line in Polish for assistance with council services. This is branded as Talkback<sup>108</sup> and works when a Polish person phones the number (available on the council website in Polish). An interpreter opens a three-way

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<sup>104</sup> <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/migrantworkers/cs/casestudy8.asp>

<sup>105</sup> De Lima, P., Chaudhry, M.M., Whelton, R. and Arshad, R. (2007) *A study of migrant workers in Grampian*, report for Communities Scotland, July 2007; Ian Fitzgerald (2007a: 2) *Working in the UK: Polish migrant worker routes into employment in the North East and North West construction and food processing sectors*, London: TUC; MISO (2006) *Supporting Migrant Workers in the North West of England*, Merseyside Social Inclusion Observatory policy report 3, October 2006.

<sup>106</sup> Know Your Rights helpline on 0870 600 4 882.

<sup>107</sup> [http://www.helplines.org.uk/tha\\_home\\_page.htm](http://www.helplines.org.uk/tha_home_page.htm)

<sup>108</sup> Further details can found at [http://www.eastriding.gov.uk/community\\_living/translation\\_services.html](http://www.eastriding.gov.uk/community_living/translation_services.html)

conference with the council employee who needs to be spoken to about an issue involving the council or within its remit.

Finally for this section, it is worth noting a means identified by the MISO (2006: 146)<sup>109</sup> report. They highlight that there is potential to link the provision of basic information for Polish workers coming to the UK to when people buy their **travel tickets**. The authors cite a Polish interviewee who notes that he was given information about insurance and hotels when he bought his tickets. The question is then asked of why this can not be extended to other forms of important information.

Overall there is a growing amount of information provided by not only differing layers of organisations but also organisations, NGOs and government agencies at a European, national, regional and local level. The question becomes then, after Poles have taken up employment and settled here for a short period why they are still asking for ‘any information’. Whilst the translation and interpretation of much of this is likely to be a significant issue it is focus and location that is the key. The central issue is that with the multi-entry points that we now have, due to multiple transport links, and the need at these UK arrival points for speed of entry, it is perhaps not surprising that many, if not all, are information free. The control exercised by agencies and employers is of course also significant here. Given this once Poles are in the country it clearly becomes a more difficult task of engagement and mapping with often access to these groups and their communities the key. Section Three now discusses this further with reference to trade union engagement with Polish workers.

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<sup>109</sup> MISO (2006) *Supporting Migrant Workers in the North West of England*, Merseyside Social Inclusion Observatory policy report 3, October 2006.

### 3. Reaching out – engaging with new Polish workers

It would seem from interviewees here and in other research that Polish workers still consider that their informational requirements are not being met, and as stated these might be expected to change over time. A growing amount of information is being produced so the issue becomes one of not only focus but also access to information. From a union point of view an important side of access is engagement with Polish workers. This engagement is often tied to Polish migrant worker trust of unions and trade union representatives. As many unions will be aware gaining trust can be a time consuming process both within and outside the workplace. As interviewees commented:

*It's a slow process but we're getting there, it's about talking and communications and most importantly not ignoring people. You have to keep talking to people, it's about trust.*

(BFAWU District organiser)

*I think the key is how welcome the Poles are made to feel by their fellow workers. (Usdaw full-time official)*

The length of early engagement, with seemingly little membership reward, has caused concerns in a number of joint projects with Polish workers. For example a Ucat interviewee for this study, quite rightly, noted that there was early criticism of the joint NTUC/Ucat/Northumbria TUC Polish project<sup>110</sup>. This came because the newly employed regional Ucat development officer, and other officers, spent many long hours and months engaging with Poles with little membership gain. However, as the project progressed people became aware of the vital work that the Northern Region of Ucat

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<sup>110</sup> Fitzgerald, I. (2006) *Organising Migrant Workers in Construction: Experience from the North East of England*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Northern TUC.

were undertaking and the outcome was a well received final project. Again in this project a Ucat interviewee noted issues with engagement '*....I don't speak any Polish so without the ability to discuss union matters it is very difficult*' (Ucat full-time official). Although, there has been membership gain here and the union have used innovative initiatives to engage with Polish workers.

As a way of dealing with these issues of engagement and trust many unions have sort to deploy Polish reps and full-time organisers (Fitzgerald 2007a)<sup>111</sup>. This has also been found in the current study and may indicate a significant change in attitude in the Region, given the findings of Perrett and Martinez Lucio (2006b: 28)<sup>112</sup>. These authors noted that union credibility was undermined by a lack of BME officials. Using officials and reps of the same nationality is a strong indication of a more sensitive approach to engaging with BME workers, in particular the Poles. As a GMB Senior Organiser commented '*...when we are now given a lead or are approached by migrant workers, we are careful about how we deal with this. We now try to either use a native speaking individual or be sensitive to the culture we are dealing with*'. In this study a number of unions identified that they were training Poles to become reps and full-time officials. For example, Unite Amicus section reported that they had Polish activists who attended meetings and would soon have a full-time Polish official (interviews). Bfawu detailed how they had used Polish activists in the Region to organise difficult to reach Polish agency workers. In the same vain Usdaw also noted that they are using Polish reps on sites and these have been successful in organising difficult to reach A8 agency workers (interviews).

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<sup>111</sup> Fitzgerald, I. (2007a) *Working in the UK: Polish migrant worker routes into employment in the North East and North West construction and food processing sectors*, London: TUC.

<sup>112</sup> Perrett, R. and Martinez Lucio, M. (2006b) *Trade Unions and Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Communities in Yorkshire and the Humber: Employment representation and community organisations in a context of change*, Leeds: Yorkshire and the Humber TUC.

Whilst the GMB Senior Organiser reported that the union had introduced two project workers (one Lithuanian and one Pole), with one now becoming part of their Regional organising team. Significantly, for the GMB there has been a membership gain here in the Region and in fact overall in the UK. It was reported that some 3,000 migrant workers, many of them Poles, had joined the GMB.

Trade unions overall are also working with Polish trade union members, who although not ready to be reps or officials, are important links between the unions and Polish workforces. One regional interviewee also noted the use of retired Polish members:

*....we did organise a retired Polish worker to interpret for us on an occasional basis. In my opinion one of the things we could do with is a network of retired Poles who would be willing to be union intermediaries.* (Ucatt Regional Secretary)

Overall there have been a range of Polish activists liaised with to effectively engage with Polish groups and some communities<sup>113</sup>. This has been either in the community through new and retired Polish community activists or in the workplace through new Poles who often, as above, do not yet want to be fully involved in local union structures. A recent report has commented that the important role that these latter workplace Polish ‘buddies’ play should in some way be formally recognised<sup>114</sup>.

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<sup>113</sup> Campaign Company (2007) *Membership Diversity*, an unpublished Union Modernisation Fund research project report. See also de Lima, P., Chaudhry, M.M., Whelton, R. and Arshad, R. (2007) *A study of migrant workers in Grampian*, report for Communities Scotland, July 2007; They talk about this role with regard to employees, whilst the author has witnessed Polish English speaking workers, on a number of occasions, assisting Ucatt.

<sup>114</sup> Campaign Company (2007) *Membership Diversity*, an unpublished Union Modernisation Fund research project report.

The remainder of this section discusses access to Polish workers by highlighting trade union engagement with Polish workers at the workplace, in the community and finally how collaboration can be an effective approach underpinning information strategies.

### ***3.1 Engaging with Polish workers: At the Regional workplace***

The workplace is still often the first place of contact for a trade union with regard to Polish migrant workers and remains the central arena in which unions undertake their role. As noted above this first contact can often lead to a long drawn out process as unions build trust with Polish workers. A number of interviewees reported that building this trust and engagement with Poles was initially begun with 'breaking the ice' initiatives. These can often be just short conversations with Poles or a simple show of friendship. More strategic examples are the learning agenda discussed below. Whilst an interesting approach was used by an Usdaw full-time official. She described how during the last football World Cup Usdaw reps at a Tesco distribution site set-up a series of football matches with the Poles. These led to a breaking down of barriers and along with successful union negotiations with the employer over Polish worker accommodation issues, a number of Poles joined the union (approximately 70) with two becoming reps.

However, a number of interviewees also reported the reverse side of this engagement. The reticence of Poles with regard to unions, whilst the ZPWB representative in Bradford believed that this may be due to an attitude amongst some Poles of '*why do I have to fork-out for union membership?*' A number of union interviewees felt, though, that it was more to do with Polish fears that employers would dismiss them if they spoke to the union. For example a Ucat full-time official stated that '*....there is a big fear factor here for the Poles with regard to the employer*'. Interestingly, the Unite Amicus section

Regional Secretary whilst recognising the same issue believed that *'....the younger Poles are more open and relaxed in dealing with things and do not seem to have the fear in their eyes'*.

This is of course also to do with an amount of general employer hostility to trade unions and feeds into the broader question of sectors and workplaces where unions have a strong presence and those where they do not. For example in food processing the Bfawu District organiser reported that they had been successful at a number of brownfield sites where they had recognition. But that greenfield sites had been more difficult, as the interviewee commented *'....at some greenfield sites we have to wait outside and catch them before they go in'*. With regard to this he reported how the union had:

*....used Polish 'organisers' from our Bridlington national conference. I took two of our Polish delegates and we went off to organise the plant. It was really a success and the Polish workers at the plant really appreciated us taking people who spoke their language.*  
(Bfawu District organiser)

He further identified that agencies were a major issue here and that *'....a lot of Poles are agency workers in our sector and for too long we have been ignoring agency workers. We have not wanted agency workers but it's a fact of life, you have to organise them, it's impossible to hold this back'*. Given this they are working towards agreements with agencies along the same lines as their Sunrise Solutions agreement. Amongst other things this agency agreement offers not only an early opportunity to recruit Polish workers in Poland but also provide them with basic information on their UK employment etc<sup>115</sup>. A number of Regional unions also reported on the distribution of Polish language leaflets and other means for providing some general information and more specific facts about the union.

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<sup>115</sup> For further discussion of this agreement, see Ian Fitzgerald (2007a: 2) *Working in the UK: Polish migrant worker routes into employment in the North East and North West construction and food processing sectors*, London: TUC.

Moving to more formal approaches there were two other main workplace strategies reported. The first, the learning agenda, is becoming a common trade union engagement approach. Whilst the second, a 'rate-for-the-job' approach is a direct and clear strategy which, as trade unionist will be aware, is the most difficult to maintain.

To take learning first a number of unions reported the significance of ESOL provision in providing evidence to Poles of the unions' importance. Fitzgerald (2007a)<sup>116</sup> reports how both Bfawu and Usdaw reps report that Poles used learning centre computers to book flights home and communicate with family and friends. This provided an opportunity for reps to begin communication; often putting the case to Poles that unions administered the centres and that there was an opportunity to be involved in mainly ESOL initiatives if they joined unions. Again with this project interviewees from these unions identified this occurring in the Region; other unions also identified ESOL as important for engagement. Concern has, though, been raised above over future ESOL provision and worryingly in a recent LSC report on skills provision for migrant workers<sup>117</sup>. The LSC, whilst discussing Further Education ESOL provision, stress a major issue here is that much ESOL provision does not relate to enrolments on National Qualification Framework (NQF) courses. The significance of this is that NQF courses count towards Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets whilst other ESOL courses do not. The LSC in particular highlight the Region when commenting on this. Concluding that:

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<sup>116</sup> Fitzgerald, I. (2007a) *Working in the UK: Polish migrant worker routes into employment in the North East and North West construction and food processing sectors*, London: TUC.

<sup>117</sup> LSC (2007) *Migrant Workers and the Labour Market: Review of LSC research on labour market participation, skills and skills provision for migrant workers*, Learning and Skills Council report, January 2007.



*The increase in demand from A8 migrants for ESOL provision is part of a general picture of excess demand with inadequate supply, meaning that some providers are increasing or introducing entry criteria. This may help to meet the national PSA targets, but will also clearly limit access by some potential learners with the greatest need. (LSC 2007 p14)*

As, noted above much available information is in English, with limited finance with regard to translation or interpretation of this into Polish, let alone the growing number of other languages. Therefore *‘people must have a basic understanding of English, because we have seen it on sites with people having no idea of health and safety’* (Unite Amicus section full-time official).

Finally, interviewees also spoke about the importance of maintaining the ‘rate-for-the-job’. This can often be the most effective means of supporting and engaging with Polish workers in the workplace. As even when Polish workers have the right information this still does not mean that they can use this to effectively safeguard their employment rights. It is also the most direct approach to maintaining harmony in both the workplace and community. However, readers will be aware that maintaining the ‘rate-for-the-job’ can be a very difficult task to accomplish. A Ucatt full-time official reported that they had some success with this in the Sheffield area, although this did not particularly directly equate to Polish membership growth. Interestingly, also in construction the Unite Amicus section Regional Secretary reported a ‘wage transparency’ agreement which the union had secured. This had been introduced because the union had recognised that in workplaces in the Region which were covered by the National Agreement for the Engineering Construction Industry (NAECI) for skilled construction workers. Polish and other companies had been introducing posted

workers<sup>118</sup> much below the agreed rate. The 'wage transparency' agreement works through an independent auditor paid for by the employer, who checks Polish posted workers wages through the company accounts on a monthly basis. However, when this was initially set-up wages were paid through a company bank account, therefore when wages were forwarded to individual Poles they were considerably reduced. The union subsequently made sure that all wages are now paid into the Yorkshire Bank and workers have bank cards to withdraw their money directly. The long process of securing this agreement began with early engagement with Hungarian workers who were working on a power station scaffolding project. The union managed to recruit one of these workers, but when the foreign employer found out the worker was immediately ordered back to Hungary. He protested but was sent out of the country only to return through his own means. When he returned to his UK employer provided accommodation he was almost immediately thrown out by employer representatives:

*...it was snowing and very cold, Barnabas (Hungarian – Unite Amicus section member) had nowhere to go and so stayed overnight at the site. When the English lads came in the next day they found him freezing cold and destitute, they took him to the canteen to warm-up and paid for his breakfast. When he explained about his treatment and the wages he was receiving they took immediate strike action. We looked after him until the situation was resolved and it lasted (the strike) five weeks until he was re-instated at the site on the proper rate for the job and with acceptable external accommodation. (Unite Amicus section Regional Secretary)*

The Unite Amicus section Regional Secretary notes that this is not a broadly applicable strategy for many unions. But this and the Sunrise Solution agency agreement are

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<sup>118</sup> EU (1996) *Posted Workers Directive* 96/71/EC (The Posting of Workers Directive), see <http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c10508.htm>

examples of the importance of regulation or having agreed and well policed procedures in place. Regulation and procedures remove a number of the integration and cohesion barriers and would clearly lessen a number of the informational needs of Polish workers.

It is clear that the workplace will always remain a major point of engagement with Polish workers and a place where information needs can both be catered for and decided on. But as readers will be only too aware union workplaces are not as common as they once were. Due to this unions are becoming increasingly involved in potential access and engagement areas external to the workplace. What follows highlights a number of these areas and the potential that these have for union involvement.

### ***3.2 Engaging with Polish workers: Beyond the Regional workplace***

Accepting then that trust is a significant early issue trade unions have to also accept, as many are beginning to, that they will have to work beyond the workplace and that this may take time and resources. When they do this, given funding and finance issues, they need also to develop a co-ordinated approach not only with other unions but also with other organisations and this is discussed later.

Beyond the workplace means having to think about community. Community begs a range of questions, the most obvious being age, gender and locality. Two TUC reports<sup>119</sup> in the north of England have identified that for too long BME communities have been 'left' by trade unions with piecemeal contact, except intermittently at the workplace. The accession of the A8 countries provided a new imperative to engage

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<sup>119</sup> Perrett, R. and Martinez Lucio, M. (2006b) *Trade Unions and Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Communities in Yorkshire and the Humber: Employment representation and community organisations in a context of change*, Leeds: Yorkshire and the Humber TUC ; and Fitzgerald, I. and Stirling, J. (2004) *BME views of trade unions*, Newcastle upon Tyne: TUC.

with migrant workers and some of the most innovative work has occurred with the Poles<sup>120</sup>.

Perrett and Martinez Lucio (2006a and 2006b)<sup>121</sup> in their work in the Region highlight the importance of networks when engaging with any community but particularly when dealing with BME populations. The idea of networks can be extended to include not only those groups engaged in working for their communities but also the networks that make up a community, which can often be more open and fluid. For the Poles the most obviously already existing networks are the Federation of Poles in Great Britain (ZPWB), whose network extends to northern representatives who have often played a leading role with newly arrived Poles. Also already here were the Polish churches and their parish committees, which are often linked to the ZPWB. The more open and fluid networks are best personified by the web which is now increasing a building block of for the developing Polish northern communities.

Before moving on it is worth re-emphasising a number of issues raised in the work of Martinez Lucio<sup>122</sup> and Perrett<sup>123</sup> in the Region with regard to trade union engagement

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<sup>120</sup> Fitzgerald, I. and Hardy, J. (2007) *'Thinking Outside the Box': Trade Union Organising Strategies and Polish Migrant Workers in the UK*, paper presented at the International Industrial Relations Association, Manchester, 3rd – 6th September 2007.

<sup>121</sup> Perrett, R. and Martinez Lucio, M. (2006a) *Networks, Communities and the Representation of Black and Minority Ethnic Workers in Employment Relations: The realities of community politics and trade unions*, Bradford University School of Management Working Paper 06/16, June 2006; and (2006b) *Trade Unions and Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Communities in Yorkshire and the Humber: Employment representation and community organisations in a context of change*, Leeds: Yorkshire and the Humber TUC.

<sup>122</sup> Martinez Lucio, M. and Perrett, R. (2007) *Social inclusion and representation strategies in the workplace and community: Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) workers and innovative trade union responses*, Leeds: Yorkshire and the Humber TUC.

<sup>123</sup> Perrett, R. and Martinez Lucio, M. (2006a) *Networks, Communities and the Representation of Black and Minority Ethnic Workers in Employment Relations: The realities of community politics and trade unions*, Bradford University School of Management Working Paper 06/16, June 2006; and (2006b) *Trade Unions and Black and*

with BME networks. This work for the Regional TUC highlights a number of interlinked challenges that may be faced by trade unions dealing with the types of networks identified above.

The authors initially identify that the more formalised BME networks '*....endure their own structural and political difficulties that trade unions must be aware of and sensitive to prior to engagement*' (Perrett and Martinez Lucio 2006b: 33). There is an argument here that the ZPWB and Polish Church have been only too pleased to seek 'external' support in dealing with the problems that the new migration has brought. As a Regional ZPWB representative commented, when asked about the migration to the Region, '*...the response from our established community has been pretty abysmal*'. He went on to state that he believed that the Polish consulate should do more to help, although the author is aware that the Hull Polish consul for one has been working very long hours to deal with an often difficult situation<sup>124</sup>.

More specifically, Perrett and Martinez Lucio note that funding is often central to the challenges faced by BME networks (Perrett and Martinez Lucio 2006b: 33). This is clearly an issue for the Poles as current key activists in the ZPWB and /or on the parish committees engage with newly arrived Polish workers. Perrett and Martinez Lucio (2006b: 34) turn this on its head and argue, quite rightly, that trade unions have similar problems (e.g. with funding for learning and partnership projects), and indeed expertise in this area, so they should be looking to develop funding alliances. There is also an argument that with the Poles this can go further and funding coalitions should be

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*Minority Ethnic (BME) Communities in Yorkshire and the Humber: Employment representation and community organisations in a context of change*, Leeds: Yorkshire and the Humber TUC.

<sup>124</sup> At the recent *Economic Migration in the European Union – Problems and Challenges* seminar the Polish government announced that they were going to increase the number of Polish consuls, including a Manchester based Consular General.

formed with other organisations to employ project workers to assist with providing for example information.

A further area of concern was communication and co-ordination deficiencies within networks (Perrett and Martinez Lucio 2006b: 34). This led to no clear leadership or voice for communities and also the potential for exclusion of certain groups. The Poles have a ready made national network in the ZPWB and the close links the community has with Polish churches. More problematic may be the growing number of young Polish community activists who may begin to vie for prominence as government increasingly approach Polish communities for their opinions. This may then turn to open competition, with all its consequential complications, as clear funding opportunities begin to appear.

Finally, the authors comment on the advertising and signposting of a Polish event. Martinez Lucio and Perrett (2007: 28)<sup>125</sup> note that a recent trade union information and community guidance surgery met with problems of where to locate and how to advertise. This links into earlier work by the authors<sup>126</sup> where they note that union services overall had to be 'more clearly and better sold' (Perrett and Martinez Lucio 2006a: 13). They cite a national officer of a large community advice and information service who comments that the Service had through '*...intensely advertising their services and building a good reputation at community level made [themselves] a 'household name'*' (ibid: 13).

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<sup>125</sup> Martinez Lucio, M. and Perrett, R. (2007) *Social inclusion and representation strategies in the workplace and community: Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) workers and innovative trade union responses*, Leeds: Yorkshire and the Humber TUC.

<sup>126</sup> Perrett, R. and Martinez Lucio, M. (2006a) *Networks, Communities and the Representation of Black and Minority Ethnic Workers in Employment Relations: The realities of community politics and trade unions*, Bradford University School of Management Working Paper 06/16, June 2006.

The following highlights the main potential and actual areas of community engagement with Polish workers, discussing traditional Polish networks, more ad hoc events that have been organised at a local level and finally the newer opportunities offered by the growth of Polish media sources.

### **3.2.1 Traditional and long established networks**

The Federation of Poles in Great Britain (ZPWB) and the Catholic Church offer two readily identifiable access points to Polish networks and often large groupings of Polish workers. Network members have often been at the forefront of assisting newly arrived Polish migrant workers and offer excellent opportunities for the dissemination of information. The networks and their ‘participants’ are also often interlinked, for example with ZPWB representatives on parish committees, whilst the Polish Catholic Mission has a tradition of strong links with the ZPWB and has a representative on its Executive Committee.. The following discusses these networks in more depth.

*The Federation of Poles in Great Britain (ZPWB)*<sup>127</sup>: Are an umbrella organisation representing the interests of Polish groups in the UK (interview with Jan Mokrzycki – President ZPWB). The ZPWB has a number of representatives in the UK, significantly for this Region Mokrzycki stated that they had four representatives in the Region, all in Yorkshire (in Bradford, Huddersfield, Leeds and Sheffield). Of further importance is the fact that they have just obtained funding to support an outreach worker in Bradford. She is part-time and one of her aims is to engage with trade unions in the Region. In particular, the ZPWB are hoping to establish a wider network in the Humber. Mokrzycki has commented in the past to the author that he believed that the problem with getting Poles to join trade unions was that there was a lack of information. When

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<sup>127</sup> Further contact details and information can be found at <http://www.zpwb.org.uk/eg/index.php>

interviewed for this project he said that information was now starting to come through but there was still a need for it. He made the point that the new edition of the ZPWB's 'How to Live and Work in Great Britain' (in Polish) is awaiting production of approximately 30,000 copies. Seventy thousand of the earlier editions had been distributed. The currently available electronic version<sup>128</sup> contains basic but essential information, from how to register and get a national insurance number, to how to get your child into a school. Significantly, it also carries advertisements by trade unions and a piece on the importance of trade unions for Polish workers. Finally, it is important to highlight that Mokrzycki has established important links with the TUC nationally and for example in the Midlands and would welcome engagement in this Region.

***The Catholic Church:*** The church were significantly involved in the struggles in Poland in the 1980s and Solidarnosc have reported in previous interviews with the author that churches were often used as clandestine meeting places following services.

Interestingly when interviewed for this project a Solidarnosc international officer described how when he went to Ireland he was surprised at how many young people attended church. He felt that this was because *'I think they are searching for community, they are looking for something that is important. It is like the rise of Polish music concerts for these people it is important that they can be united and meet together'*. As <sup>129</sup> Mokrzycki confirmed when asked about the church *'often they are the first point of contact'* for newly arrived Polish workers. At the Regional level a ZPWB representative commented that *'....this has caught the Roman Catholic Church by surprise; it has been a major change for them'*

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<sup>128</sup> <http://www.zpwb.org.uk/pl/index.php>

<sup>129</sup> Martinez Lucio, M. and Perrett, R. (2007) *Social inclusion and representation strategies in the workplace and community: Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) workers and innovative trade union responses*, Leeds: Yorkshire and the Humber TUC.



(ZPWB representative: Bradford). Carby-Hall<sup>130</sup> further cites the Church as '*a symbol of Poland*' (ibid. 209). With regard to the actual numbers of churches the Audit Commission (2007)<sup>131</sup> state that there are currently 68 Polish churches in England and Wales (ibid 18). There are also a number of others that provide Polish mass. Importantly, for this study at least four of these are based in Yorkshire (for example those in Bradford, Huddersfield, Leeds and Sheffield), which is of course also the location of the ZPWB Regional representatives. Also Regionally Carby-Hall<sup>132</sup> reports that the Catholic Church dioceses official policy is to assist and support Polish migrant workers, in particular the Bishops of Leeds, Middlesbrough and Nottingham officially support the Yorkshire and Lincolnshire regions in advising and helping Polish and other A8 economic migrants and the self-employed (ibid 209). He further reports on the co-ordination between the Church, the Local Authority of Hull and the Polish Consulate to assist and inform Polish workers in a number of areas ranging from their employment rights, through taxation and banking issues to advice on housing and schooling. Trade unions and their representatives have not been slow to engage here. For example Unite T&G section earlier this year launched an initiative with the Catholic Church in Scotland to support migrant workers and in particular the Poles<sup>133</sup>. The

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<sup>130</sup> Carby-Hall, J. (2007) *The Treatment of Polish and Other A8 Economic Migrants in the European Union Member States*, report for the Commissioner for Civil Rights Protection of the Republic of Poland.

<sup>131</sup> Audit Commission (2007) *Crossing borders: Responding to the local challenges of migrant workers*, public services national report, January 2007, London: Audit Commission.

<sup>132</sup> Carby-Hall, J. (2007) *The Treatment of Polish and Other A8 Economic Migrants in the European Union Member States*, report for the Commissioner for Civil Rights Protection of the Republic of Poland.

<sup>133</sup> See the Financial Times (2007) Church joins union fight to help migrants, Financial Times, 17<sup>th</sup> February 2007. Available at [http://search.ft.com/ftArticle?queryText=%22Cardinal+Keith+O%92Brien%22&y=9&aje=false&x=17&id=070217000544&ct=0&ncklick\\_check=1](http://search.ft.com/ftArticle?queryText=%22Cardinal+Keith+O%92Brien%22&y=9&aje=false&x=17&id=070217000544&ct=0&ncklick_check=1)

Financial Times quotes Unite T&G section as having 10,000 Polish members and Cardinal Keith O'Brien as commenting that:

*The contribution, economically, culturally and spiritually, of migrant workers to Scotland will be greatly enriching, and we are keen to work with the union to ensure that they are not ill-treated or exploited.*

Finally, it is significant to note that unions in this Region reported undertaking community organising through the Polish Church. For example both Unite Amicus section and Unite T&G section noted this, with a Regional Unite Amicus section full-time official firm in his belief that:

*The church is the way in every time; this is not an organisation that I would normally align myself with but they have been very helpful. I had no problems with using this gateway; someone said to me you should have used this route when we first came over. They were so happy that we were going to use this route at last and start to organise people. They have been very positive.*

He further reported that now the two unions have merged to form Unite they are planning to promote Unite through a joint Unite Amicus section and Unite T&G section union day following the Sunday Church service.

### **3.2.2 Direct community engagement with Polish workers: Locations and 'events'**

Apart from the ZPWB and Church there are a range of other community focal points which are used on a regular basis by Polish workers. For example in the Region a recent presentation by a North Yorkshire County Council officer highlighted that information boards in local libraries were being extensively used by migrant workers, many of

whom are Poles<sup>134</sup>. As with the learning centres commented on before many of these Polish workers went in libraries initially so that they could communicate electronically with home. Some Regional libraries are now developing this by providing Polish books (see above). Whilst many trade unionists and all major unions are aware of the importance of either one-off events or more regular drop-in sessions which provide both general and union specific information. A number of these, if not organised on Church premises, often take place in local community centres frequented by the Poles. These are often either union led providing specific information on the union and employment rights or are union and multi-agency based providing a range of information. The multi-agency approaches were commented on by a number of interviewees, as a community worker at the Bradford Resource Centre stated '*....we've run events here and found that the new Polish community want information, they want answers*'. The Bradford Resources Centre has run a number of sessions in collaboration with Regional unions. Martinez Lucio and Perrett (2007: 22-23)<sup>135</sup> report on a multi-agency session, including unions, that was successful in providing information and contacts to those who attended. They highlight, amongst other things, the importance of maintaining this contact through ongoing drop-in surgeries and the importance of collaboration here between trade unions and other community based organisations, all discussed later. A Bradford Resource Centre community worker also spoke about this noting that the Poles regularly came into the centre to use the IT facilities. He further made a significant comment:

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<sup>134</sup> Walker, D. (2007) *Current Responses to the Needs of the BME Community and Routes by which the Public Sector can be Influenced*, York and North Yorkshire Multi-agency Black Minority and Ethnic Social Inclusion Conference, 21 March 2007.

<sup>135</sup> Martinez Lucio, M. and Perrett, R. (2007) *Social inclusion and representation strategies in the workplace and community: Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) workers and innovative trade union responses*, Leeds: Yorkshire and the Humber TUC.

*When we first had an event here there were one or two people who pretended they couldn't speak English. They were so scared of talking to the union because of the gangmaster or agency. But we had provided food and translators and after 10mins some of those who supposedly couldn't speak English were telling us all sorts of things.*

This of course highlights again that the 'community' in its different forms can often be a safe haven for some of the most vulnerable Poles. Therefore, if initial approaches are well thought out it may significantly reduce the time that it can take to gain trust and start meaningful communication. On this wider note of engagement, a Unite Amicus section full-time official reported that in early 2008 the union were planning to undertake a disco with a young Polish member who is a DJ. This they believed would attract Poles and they were going to use the event to both communicate with the Poles and gain information about what was going on in both the Polish community and in Polish migrant workplaces. They intend to advertise this event in Polish newspapers and at the Polish club and it will be run in a community centre with Polish food.

Polish community interviewees were generally positive about the events so far organised. The ZPWB Bradford representative, particularly liked the Unite Amicus section event run at the Bradford Resource Centre as it was multi-agency, had signposting and a number of interpreters. He commented that '*....the Bradford Resource Centre is ideal. The approaches used so far have been excellent and very welcoming*'. He did, though, note issues with some other sessions, highlighting that these have not had enough interpreters as, '*without this it does not matter which service is at the evening*'. He went on to report that at one particular evening a very well known NGO had asked people to attend its 'offices' the next day for help. When they did there was no interpretation or easily accessible Polish documents available. This has led to some of

the Polish community questioning these types of event and another Polish community activist in Hull took this up noting worryingly that:

*It is very difficult to get these people to come; they now believe that all they will be able to do is tell people about their problems but they will not get answers. There was a major problem at that meeting that a lot of people had difficulty with English.* (Hull Polish web administrator)

This Hull Polish web administrator believed that the best way to organise sessions was to announce them as help and advice drop-in sessions. He also considered that a multi-agency approach was needed with good access to interpreters and separate 'stalls' '*....the problem last time was people did not know who was who!*'. Another Polish community activist agreed that there was a need with these types of events to have clear sign-posting with regard to both who organisations represented and the help that they could provide.

It is important, though to end on a positive note as these events in both the Region and in the UK have been very positive for both Polish workers and the other organisations taking part, as the Bradford ZPWB representative stated '*....they've met with a lot of success!*'.

### **3.2.3 The Polish UK media: A growing attraction**

Approaches so far identified have involved physical situations when there are clear face-to-face opportunities to talk with Polish workers. The growing Polish media also provides an opportunity to potentially reach a wider number of Polish workers and those who may be in the most vulnerable situations and difficult to reach locations. This

also importantly relates back to the Martinez Lucio and Perrett<sup>136</sup> concerns around advertising information events and as significantly advertising trade unions themselves, so that trade unions may get nearer to becoming a 'household' name in the Polish community. With regard to this Polish media two final approaches using newspapers, magazines and the internet are now discussed.

*Newspapers and magazine:* There are a growing number of Polish newspapers and magazines, often localised around Polish parishes or larger regional cities and towns. Some like the Polish Express have UK wide distribution through some of the most important high street names like WHSmith News and John Menzies. A number of national unions are becoming aware of the potential offered by advertising in this media. For example, with regard to Polish workers Fitzgerald and Hardy (2007)<sup>137</sup> give the example of Usdaw who had recently advertised in a Polish daily. Usdaw now wanted to develop this by identifying newsworthy positive Polish/ Usdaw engagement stories to submit for publication. At the Regional level both indigenous community activists who worked with Polish workers and Polish community activists identified this form of media as useful:

*Unions should look to get a foothold through for example the Polish language newspapers.*

(Bradford Resource Centre: Community worker)

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<sup>136</sup> Martinez Lucio, M. and Perrett, R. (2007) *Social inclusion and representation strategies in the workplace and community: Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) workers and innovative trade union responses*, Leeds: Yorkshire and the Humber TUC; and Perrett, R. and Martinez Lucio, M. (2006a) *Networks, Communities and the Representation of Black and Minority Ethnic Workers in Employment Relations: The realities of community politics and trade unions*, Bradford University School of Management Working Paper 06/16, June 2006.

<sup>137</sup> Fitzgerald, I. and Hardy, J. (2007) *'Thinking Outside the Box': Trade Union Organising Strategies and Polish Migrant Workers in the UK*, paper presented at the International Industrial Relations Association, Manchester, 3rd – 6th September 2007.

*This is good way to advertise union; there have been positive comments in Polish papers for unions. (Polish community activist)*

Two unions in the Region highlighted this as a good way to both establish a presence with Poles and provide information. Ucatt believed this to be a cost-effective and straight forward way to engage with locally based Poles. A Ucatt full-time officer had established contact with a locally based Polish journalist who edits a Doncaster Polish newspaper. Ucatt had then published an advert in the newspaper and planned to take this forward in the future. On a wider Regional scale the newly established union Unite had co-ordinated its separate sections, Amicus, GPMU and T&G along with Thompsons and planned to initially support a Leeds based Polish newspaper. The Leeds Polish centre is going to assist in producing this 8,000 circulation newspaper, with the other partners funding the initial editions. The Unite Amicus section full-time official noted that there had recently been a successful case concerning an underpaid Polish member and that this was one positive story that will be reported.

***Electronic communications:*** The development of new forms of communication is one of the most dramatic changes in our society today. For example in Poland there has been a significant increase in the usage of all types of communication technology since accession. The Polish Central Statistical Office notes a 'dynamic growth' in mobile phone usage in 2006 to 38.8 million subscribers<sup>138</sup>. This amounted to a twenty-six per cent rise on 2005. More importantly household possession of personal computers and those with internet access have significantly increased (Graph Three). Overall though internet access in Polish households is still behind many other EU countries and it was

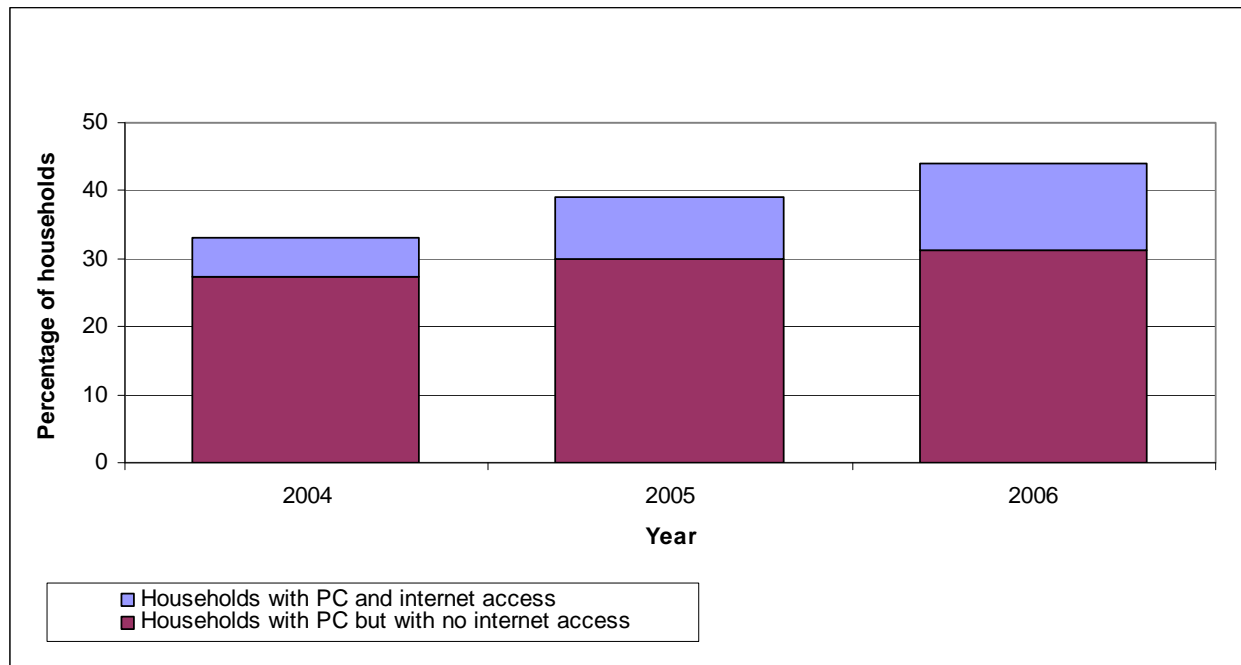
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<sup>138</sup> CSO (2007b) *Household budget surveys in 2006*, Poland: Central Statistical Office, ISSN 1896-4567.

estimated that at the end of 2006 approximately 3.1 million Poles could access the internet, an increase of seventeen per cent on 2005 (CSO 2007c)<sup>139</sup>.

The importance of the internet as an information access point has been identified by others undertaking work with migrant workers. A large number of who were A8 mainly Polish workers (MISO 2006)<sup>140</sup>. Importantly, the vast majority of the MISO interviewees had accessed the web for information both pre-migration and while in the UK. The authors of this report highlight a number of important issues that came out of their migrant worker interviewees with regard to this web usage. These included issues

Graph Three: Proportion of Polish households with PCs and internet access<sup>141</sup>



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<sup>139</sup> CSO (2007c) *Communication – Activity results in 2006*, Poland: Central Statistical Office, ISSN 1506-798X.

<sup>140</sup> MISO (2006) *Supporting Migrant Workers in the North West of England*, Merseyside Social Inclusion Observatory policy report 3, October 2006.

<sup>141</sup> Data compiled for 2004 and 2005 from CSO (2007a) *Concise Statistical Yearbook of Poland 2007*, Poland: Central Statistical Office, ISSN 1640-3630; For 2006 from CSO (2007b) *Household budget surveys in 2006*, Poland: Central Statistical Office, ISSN 1896-4567.



over language translation, that interviewees had made no specific mention of the governments *Working in the UK* website and that some interviewees felt that many sites did not seem to be aimed at them.

Language again brings us back to cost of translation and indeed what languages to translate. Whilst marketing web resources for differing ethnic groups clearly has a number of challenges. However, there are significant possibilities for collaboration with a number of the Polish websites that have appeared rapidly over the last three years. Fitzgerald (2007b)<sup>142</sup> estimates that by March 2007 there were approximately 35 UK Polish administered, Polish language, websites covering both countries (11 - UK, Scotland and Wales) and specific towns and cities (24). Interestingly, the majority (13) were based in the North of the Country. With the North East (6 – 46% of those in the north) and Yorkshire and the Humber (5 – 38% of those in the north)<sup>143</sup> having a combined total of forty-six per cent of those representing towns and cities. Significantly, the web administrator of the Hull site (<http://www.hull.pl/>), which was setup by the Polish Association in Hull, in confirming these Regional figures, noted that the web administrators of these Regional sites had a network. He offered to extend his collaboration with the Regional TUC by approaching this network and discussing the possibility of providing trade union information and advertising on these sites (Hull Polish web administrator).

Many of these sites already contain some of the most important information that Poles need when they arrive in the country. A Polish community activist further stated that businesses, including airlines and banks are now advertising on these websites, thus an

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<sup>142</sup> Fitzgerald, I. (2007b) *Polish internet recourses for the UK and Eire*, unpublished document, March 2007.

<sup>143</sup> <http://www.leeds.pl/>; <http://www.hull.pl/>; <http://www.hull.com.pl/>; <http://www.polacywyorku.org.uk/>; <http://www.polskiegoole.u2.pl/>

indication that significant numbers of Poles are accessing sites. On a wider note the activist also stated that a major motivation for web usage was both communications with home through media such as MSN and SKYPE and for their travel needs. This returns us to the point made earlier with regard to workplace learning centres and other community locations with internet access. Interestingly, an administrator of a Newcastle based website has told the author that between December 2005, when his website was launched, and December 2006, the site had received nearly a million 'hits'. He added that around 50 per cent of these hits were from those still in Poland. Lastly, as stated earlier, unions are aware of the potential here and in fact a Regional interviewee noted that Unite Amicus section were soon to begin e-learning for Polish workers. Access will be via Poles own computers or other means such as community centres and libraries (Unite Amicus section full-time official).

Section Four of this report now discusses the growing importance of trade union collaboration with other organisations to provide information and support to Polish workers.

## 4. The need for a more strategic approach

As many unions will be aware time, resources and the actual numbers of officers and workplace representatives able to undertake a sustained approach to engaging with Polish workers is limited. A number of Regional trade union interviewees spoke about either a lack of resources to develop a sustained approach or the need for trade union collaboration with other organisations dealing with Polish migrant workers:

*We do not have either the time or the resources to hire an officer on 30k a year to move this agenda forward.* (Ucatt Regional Secretary)

*....everyone is going off on their own approach. We need to develop a co-ordinated approach when dealing with Polish workers.* (Unite Amicus section full-time official)

*We need to take this a stage further and have a strategic approach. We can't do this on our own; it has to be a multi union approach to campaign on the abuses that we find. I have had a concern that different unions and different bodies are doing different things with migrant workers and there needs to be a joined-up approach. We should all work through the TUC who can pool the information we have so far and use this for a joined-up approach.* (Unite T&G section senior Regional official)

To develop a more strategic approach often means not only developing co-ordinated internal policies and practices or engaging with other unions through the TUC. It also means a co-ordinated approach to collaboration with other organisations that are often facing the same challenges and problems. The remainder of this report gives a number of examples of joint collaboration that is occurring or could occur with other organisations external to the movement.

***Employer collaboration:*** There are cases of employer and trade union collaboration with regard to the informational needs of newly arrived Polish workers. For example

the Northern bus companies (Arriva, GO Ahead Northern and First Group) have worked in 'partnership' with trade unions to introduce Polish workers into their workforce with many consequential informational needs met as standard. With First Group this included engagement with MWNW and the company being one of the first employers to sign the North West regions employer's code of practice for employing migrant workers (see RDA discussion later). There are also examples of direct engagement, closely linked to the informational needs of Poles, between employers and the Polish community, without the influence of trade unions. De Lima et al. (2007: 36)<sup>144</sup> identify at least one employer using the 'Polish community' for assistance with new Polish arrivals.

Overall then there is a clear need to identify what engagement there is and then use these working examples to encourage others (both employers and trade unions) to collaborate, as it is often at non-unionised workplaces where Polish needs are the most urgent. An opportunity currently exists for more structured employer collaboration through the use of the integration and community cohesion agenda, which as argued is linked to informational needs. The Commission on Integration and Cohesion (2007)<sup>145</sup> have recently stated that '*....the workplace provides a significant, ongoing opportunity to address the cumulative effects of the layers of separation in society....particularly if that interaction is supported and encouraged by employers working in partnership with employees*' (ibid.: 117). Given this they recommend that the Commission for Equality and Human Rights and the CBI arrange regular regional forums (with a national steering group) for

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<sup>144</sup> De Lima, P., Chaudhry, M.M., Whelton, R. and Arshad, R. (2007) *A study of migrant workers in Grampian*, report for Communities Scotland, July 2007.

<sup>145</sup> Commission on Integration and Cohesion (2007) *Our Shared Future*, Commission on Integration and Cohesion, June 2007.

representatives of employers and employees. They link this to a recommendation to develop an 'action plan' which they suggest could include:

*The role of employers in building skills....a lack of English language skills is one of the biggest barriers to integration, particularly for new migrants....The role of employers in tackling discrimination....the UNISON project – “Challenging Racism in the Workplace” is an innovative project that aims to bring employers and employees in the public sector together to tackle racism in a very practical way....The role of employers as community champions ....recognising their corporate social responsibility, many businesses encourage their employees to volunteer in their local community – with some giving paid time off to do this. We therefore recommend that large employers consider allowing employees 3 days paid leave a year for participation in defined activities (ibid.: 118-119 author emphasis).*

With the experience that the movement has had with this current migration and the vital work that many of the TUC regions have, and are, co-ordinating. There is an opportunity to become a key partner in these developments with the TUC either 'campaigning' for a role in these new forums or co-ordinating any current engagement that exists.

***Business and NGO collaboration:*** There are currently examples of businesses collaborating with trade unions to provide assistance and information to Polish migrant workers. For example, Ucat have an agreement with a company, which amongst other things, provides assistance to Polish workers with their WRS registration and claiming their tax and industry benefits from HM Revenue and Customs. The Bfawu Sunrise agency agreement is also a collaborative initiative that directly helps Poles with areas like accommodation and other workplace needs. Solicitors provide a further good example of the collaborative approaches that are developing. As Perrett and Martinez

Lucio (2006b: 20)<sup>146</sup> comment ‘one should note the role of CAB, community groups and direct access to solicitors many of which maybe embedded in local communities in a way that trade unions are not’. Importantly, signs of solicitor and trade union collaboration were found in this study, with the ‘drop-in surgeries’ identified by Martinez-Lucio and Perrett (2007: 23)<sup>147</sup> with regard to Polish workers now being undertaken by Thompsons. Thompsons provide a weekly workshop in a community centre, with this operating on a support basis with Thompsons passing on any Polish workers who need support within the workplace to Unite Amicus section (Unite Amicus section full-time official). Irwin Mitchell solicitors (IM) are also undertaking the same types of engagement in the Yorkshire sub-region, but as far as it is understood there is currently no union collaboration. An opportunity, though, does exist here to develop this as IM are hoping to develop alliances and collaborations with a range of organisations<sup>148</sup>. Bfawu also reported working with their union solicitors Whittles to assist Polish workers.

At the national level the collaboration of the TUC and NGOs has been highlighted, whilst the following are examples of regional projects that have supported and often been linked into the newly forming Polish communities.

*Keystone Development Trust (META project):* The Keystone Development Trust is one of the largest social entrepreneurship organisations in the country and is based in Norfolk. It provides an example of an NGO which collaborates with a range of other organisations, including the GMB, to work with Polish and migrant workers. Funding

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<sup>146</sup> Perrett, R. and Martinez Lucio, M. (2006b) *Trade Unions and Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Communities in Yorkshire and the Humber: Employment representation and community organisations in a context of change*, Leeds: Yorkshire and the Humber TUC.

<sup>147</sup> Martinez Lucio, M. and Perrett, R. (2007) *Social inclusion and representation strategies in the workplace and community: Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) workers and innovative trade union responses*, Leeds: Yorkshire and the Humber TUC.

<sup>148</sup> Discussions with partners in both London and Newcastle.

has come from the Home Office the East of England Development Agency (RDA) and Europe. It has a META (previously the Multilingual and European Thetford Association) support and information drop-in service four days a week, run by volunteers and part-time staff, for Polish workers. The GMB have provided a Polish speaking pilot employment rights course. This covered issues such as holidays, sick pay, contracts of employment, health and safety and exploitation.

*Selby together:* Is a Regional example of collaboration between the church, NGOs, local councils, health trusts, emergency services, training providers and the Unite T&G section. Activities are funded from a variety of sources and organisations. Its welcome pack, discussed earlier, is in Polish and English (see Appendix One).

*Hull together:* Provides another Regional example of joint collaboration between a range of organisations, including the Regional TUC. Interestingly, it again developed through the church and involved early engagement with the Polish web administrator interviewed for this project. Following this the Polish Association and website noted above were established<sup>149</sup>. Like many other collaborations this multi agency grouping seeks to engage with all migrant workers but they are also looking to reach out to other Polish communities in the Region.

***Local council collaboration:*** As seen with several of the Regional websites highlighted local councils often provide an important contact point for Polish workers to access information on locations and importantly service provision. Whilst again there is likely to have been one-off or personal contacts between councils and unions there is no established sustainable network or meeting forum to develop a joint mutually beneficial strategy. Unison, amongst others, is likely to have undertaken a number of projects in

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<sup>149</sup> <http://www.hull.com.pl/>

the area of Integration and Cohesion with the involvement of local councils. They are an obvious union to lead on developing this with regard to informational needs. Significantly, the recent Communities and Local Government and Institute of Community Cohesion good practice guide for new European engagement<sup>150</sup> encourages councils to collaborate with a number of those in the Polish community, businesses and trade unions:

*As well as working with groups such as the local chamber of commerce, regional groupings of the Federation of Small Businesses and the Confederation of British Industry, councils should seek to identify and involve individual businesses who are significant employers of migrant labour. Migrant groups themselves, trade unions and advice agencies are also vital partners, particularly in helping to identify 'rogue employers' and in raising awareness about minimum standards. (I&Dea 2007: p22 author emphasis)*

It further, under a set of self-assessment questions, asks:

*Is the local authority encouraging multi-agency work between the relevant inspection agencies, responsible employers, trade unions, the voluntary sector and migrant groups to tackle exploitation, breaches of minimum standards or criminal activity? (I&Dea 2007: 22 author emphasis).*

There is a clear opportunity here for either the TUC or unions such as Unison to approach local councils such as East Riding and look to develop structures for a sustainable response to Polish informational needs.

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<sup>150</sup> I&DEA (2007) *New European Migration: Good Practice Guide for Local Authorities, Communities and Local Government and Institute of Community Cohesion*, June 2007.



**RDA collaboration:** There are clear opportunities to seek collaboration over an information and support strategy for Polish and migrant workers through the Regional RDA Yorkshire Forward. A number of RDAs, including Yorkshire Forward<sup>151</sup>, are either in the process of forming, or have well developed, migrant worker strategies. The most obvious example of trade union collaboration in these strategies is Migrant Workers North West (MWNW). Here Unite T&G section and other regional unions have led a joint collaboration with the Northwest Regional Development Agency to provide a project involving a website and project worker. Significant here has been engagement with employers to establish a code of practice for the employment of migrant workers. Given that there are some horrific pockets of exploitation in the Region, a code of practice of this type should clearly be sort with any collaboration. As an interviewee noted when discussing trade union campaigning for this code through MWNW '....I think we should use this, for example in Bradford against companies like (high street supermarket) *paying less than the minimum*' (Unite Amicus section full-time official).

**Sustainable community collaboration:** Finally, it is important to re-emphasis the importance in not only establishing lasting engagements with Polish community organisations. But also to develop flexible sustainable structures involving trade unionists, key community activists and when needed migrant workers. This will allow not only the identification of poor employers but also key contacts to assist with accessing the informational needs or other needs of Polish migrant workers on a regular basis. One interviewee in particular spoke of a newly configured local network which will be expanded to other areas in the Region. He reported that in December 2007 Unite

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<sup>151</sup> See Experian (2006) *Attracting Talent: Final report*, report for Yorkshire Forward, the Humber Economic Forum, North West Development Agency, the Welsh Assembly Government, Skills for Care, Skills for Health and the Department of Trade and Industry's Small Business Service, October 2006.

T&G section will launch a 'migrant workers support network' which will initially cover the South Yorkshire area (Unite T&G section senior Regional official). He went on to comment that this will be 'rolled-out' to other areas in the unions Region. The network will endeavour to establish a profile with communities so that they can identify the exploitation and abuses that migrant workers are suffering and how Unite T&G section can help and assist these workers. The network will seek to provide migrant workers with information on, for example, terms and conditions of employment; on equal treatment; and education services. It will be initially focused on the Poles and advertised through: a website; word-of-mouth with the Polish migrant workers that the union are already engaged with; other local community groups; and the Polish churches:

*The purpose of the network is a two-way process. One for local community groups and churches etc. to tell migrants who might need help because of problems or issues at work to come to the T&G. Second if we can't help we will signpost migrants to other agencies that can.* (Unite T&G section senior Regional official)

The interviewee agreed that the five Polish websites in the Region could be linked in some way to this migrant support network. Whilst interestingly, on a similar note, at least one of the Polish community activists interviewed believed that a network in the Region should be developed and that this should be linked with the web, newspapers, and churches. This she argued could highlight the need for personal engagements like Polish evenings. These types of networks could be facilitated by other unions with input from the Unite T&G section on the challenges and issues involved.

The Unite T&G section senior Regional official also believed that effective trade union collaboration should be facilitated through the Regional TUC. He suggested that a sustainable community link was vital and this could be facilitated:

*....through a migrant workers forum. We have different forums in the Region, for example the racial awareness forum, but I'm not aware of a migrant workers forum, where different people from different communities and unions can get involved. Here issues can be laid on the table and a co-ordinated approach to campaigning for the rights of migrant workers, and organising them, can be developed. (Unite T&G section senior Regional official)*

This last idea is an obvious opportunity to provide a structure for trade union and key migrant community activist engagement.

## 5 Practical recommendations

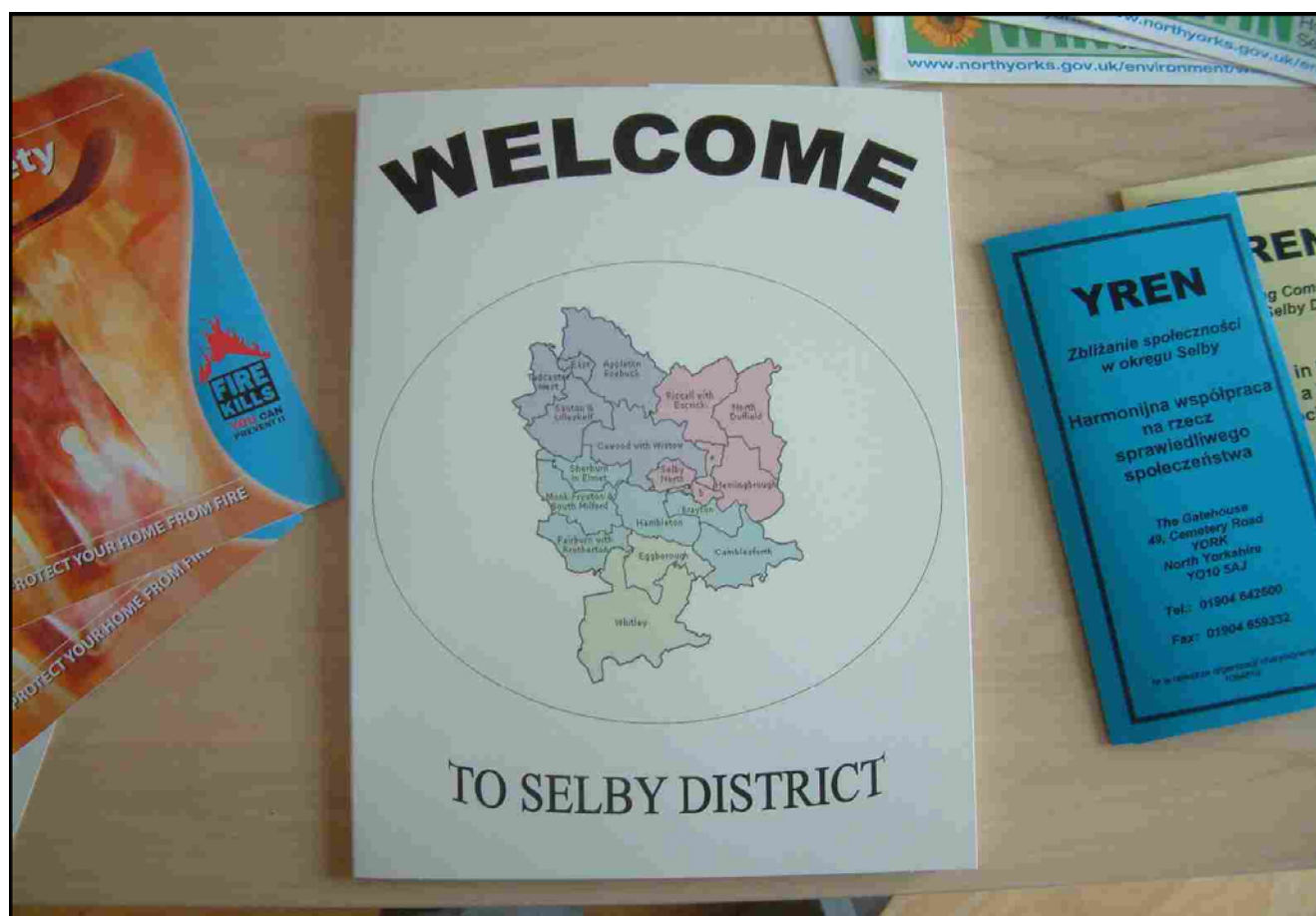
This report has identified many of the practical information and engagement initiatives that are currently occurring in the region and beyond. Given that that many of these are current and ongoing we now need to put in place practical measures which will be undertaken in the near future. The first six recommendations are achievable and can effectively be integrated into already existing strategies and programmes. Whilst the seventh international recommendation is something that should be considered given that the north in the past has engaged effectively with Solidarnosc. The recommendations are:

1. The regional TUC should seek to make contact with the ZPWB Bradford based project worker to coordinate work and improve community links;
2. The regional TUC should underpin this top down community engagement by seeking to make contact with the growing number of Polish community groups and local churches where Polish workers often socialise;
3. Contact with groups will mean engagement with some Polish community activists and migrant workers who are seeking to work with other BME communities. This will allow Polish migrant worker projects to be integrated into the core of trade union work. A starting point here is the informational needs of Polish workers which can be integrated into the already existing BME community project, which seeks to provide information and advice in local BME communities;
4. This report has identified that there is a need to strengthen governmental responses with regard to migrant worker issues. Given this the Yorkshire and the Humber regional MEPs should be contacted to consider ways of working at governmental levels on migrant and agency worker issues;

5. This report identifies that the internet is of growing importance to Polish workers. Given this, contact should be re-established with the Hull Polish web administrator. Who is also significant for local engagement with the Polish church and the other Polish websites in the region;
6. To further promote the issue of migrant and agency workers in the region and further integrate work into a sustainable core. It is crucial that the regional TUC promote the Commission on Vulnerable Employment;
7. Lastly, at the international level the regional TUC should seriously consider how it and its regional affiliates might engage with trade unions and NGOs in migrant worker countries. As a beginning Solidarnosc offers a real opportunity to begin this process, given the positive recent experience in the north with this Polish union.

# Appendix One

## SELBY TOGETHER WELCOME PACK



### Polish Edition Contents

#### e-copy and hard copy

Abbey Leisure Centre information

Church information

Community Safety Booklet

Doctors and Dentists

Educational Establishments

School support services

Local Libraries

Racial Equality Network information

Refuse Collection information

Kerbside Recycling information

Housing Department information - District Council

Polish Mums Group

#### hard copy only

Tenancy Rights - District Council

Fire Safety in the Home - Fire & Rescue Service

Living & Working in Great Britain - ZPWB

Health & Safety at Work - TUC

How to Register to Vote - District Council

How to register for medical services - Medical Centre

How to open a bank account and other financial services - Lloyds-TSB